

A Selection of Short Stories and One-Act Plays

For B.A. Students

Compiled & Edited
by
Dr. Nasim Riaz Butt



 Caravan Book House - Lahore

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Former Chairman

Department of English Language & Literature,
University of the Punjab, Lahore.

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PREFACE

This book contains a selection of fifteen short stories and four one-act plays. The stories and the plays variously represent different themes, structures, milieus and sensibilities. In the first section of the book, Short Stories, for instance, many of them are the 19th century stories representing the sociocultural and historical aspects of that age. They are written in a simple artistic structure wherein a story moves from a beginning towards a middle and an end, just like a grandma fireplace story. Nevertheless, they reveal such a powerful theme in maturation that they make us wonder how an essentially small event or a simple wish can possibly lead to such disastrous or enormous consequences.

A few of them are organized in a structure wherein the thematic complexity is managed in a special artistic manner and the characters are provided a special psychological locale. The events proceed many ways making it obligatory on the reader to keep good track of them. In fact they represent the 20th century of the two great wars which had left such a gigantic confusion for humanity at large that it has become difficult to secure cognizance of the fellow human beings or identify the problems in cultural, psychological, or spiritual contexts.

The portrayal of absurdity of the 20th century is more plausible in incongruous terms. Hence the structure of short story is rather complex. Therefore, I have taken special care of not selecting such stories as may become cumbersome for B.A. students. A complex structure of a piece of art is meant for the students of literature and not those of ordinary language. This selection of the stories and one-act plays is meant to teach the students the English language, train them for certain experiences of life, and inculcate a moral sense in their minds.

The stories and the plays are not arranged in chronological order. Their appearance in this book is from easy in language and comprehension to possibly the not-so-easy ones. Also there is not

a single story or play in the selection which does not have a "body" or a stated theme. A modernist story or play in which a certain technique is used to make it "absurd", psychologically complex, or spiritually morbid, is not included here.

The short stories and the plays are written mostly by American and British writers. However, four names — Saadat Hasan Manto, Guy De Maupassant, Honore De Balzac and Anton Checkov — are distinctly prominent whose works have been recognized as spelling out the intricacies of human situations. Their works in their original languages — Urdu, French, and Russian — must have fuller impact on the human mind, as originally they were envisaged to create, yet I have included possibly the best translations hoping not to lose much in translation.

Wherever there is a human situation, women are integral part of it. These selections aestheticise the conditions of women within certain socio-cultural references, yet as a special effort, I have included a story and a play — "Take Pity" and "Smoke Screens" — to let the young readers know the immense potentialities of women for further understanding.

A one-act play is different from a full-length play. When acted on the stage it does not create as much powerful an impact on the audience as is expected of a full-length play. May be it is not written for the stage. But in its reading, a good one-act play impresses upon the reader its unique character and forceful appeal, and its artistry helps create a forceful print on mind.

In a one-act play as much as in a short story economy is essential. The development of characters, their depth and elaboration possibly is affected due to shortage of time and space. Nevertheless, they maintain their tragic or comic characteristics. This selection is made to gather tragedy and comedy both displaying diversity within the genre.

Dr. Nasim Riaz Butt

1

THE KILLERS

Ernest Hemingway

The door of Henry's lunch-room opened and two men came in. They sat down at the counter.

'What's yours?' George asked them.

'I don't know,' one of the men said. 'What do you want to eat, Al?'

'I don't know,' said Al. 'I don't know what I want to eat.'

Outside it was getting dark. The street-light came on outside the window. The two men at the counter read the menu. From the other end of the counter Nick Adams watched them. He had been talking to George when they came in.

'I'll have a roast pork tenderloin with apple sauce and mashed potatoes,' the first man said.

'It isn't ready yet.'

'What the hell do you put it on the card for?'

'That's the dinner,' George explained. 'You can get that at six o'clock.'

George looked at the clock on the wall behind the counter.

'It's five o'clock.'

'The clock says twenty minutes past five,' the second man said.

'It's twenty minutes fast.'

'Oh, to hell with the clock,' the first man said. 'What have you got to eat?'

'I can give you any kind of sandwiches,' George said. 'You can have ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver and bacon, or a steak.'

'Give me chicken croquettes with green peas and cream sauce and mashed potatoes.'

'That's the dinner.'

'Everything we want's the dinner, eh? That's the way you work it'.

'I can give you ham and eggs, bacon and eggs, liver

'I'll take ham and eggs,' the man called Al said. He wore a derby hat and a black overcoat buttoned across the chest. His face was small and white and he had tight lips. He wore a silk muffler and gloves.

'Give me bacon and eggs,' said the other man. He was about the same size as Al. Their faces were different, but they were dressed like twins. Both wore overcoats too tight for them. They sat leaning forward, their elbows on the counter.

'Got anything to drink?' Al asked.

'Silver beer, bevo, ginger-ale,' George said.

'I mean you got anything to drink?'

'Just those I said.'

'This is a hot town,' said the other. 'What do they call it?'

'Summit.'

'Ever hear of it?' Al asked his friend.

'No,' said the friend.

'What do you do her nights?' Al asked.

'They eat the dinner,' his friend said. 'They all come here and eat the big dinner.'

'That's right,' George said.

'So you think that's right?' Al asked George.

'Sure.'

'You're a pretty bright boy, aren't you?'

'Sure,' said George.

'Well, you're not,' said the other little man. 'Is he, Al?'

'He's dumb,' said Al. He turned to Nick. 'What's your name?'

'Adams.'

'Another bright boy,' Al said, 'Ain't he a bright boy, Max?'

'The town's full of bright boys,' Max said.

George put the two platters, one of ham and eggs, the other of bacon and eggs, on the counter. He set down two side-dishes of fried potatoes and close the wicket into the kitchen.

'Which is yours?' he asked Al.

'Don't you remember?'

'Ham and eggs.'

'Just a bright boy,' Max said. He leaned forward and took the ham and eggs. Both men ate with their gloves on. George watched them eat.

'What are you looking at?' Max looked at George.

'Nothing.'

'The hell you were. You were looking at me.'

'Maybe the boy meant it for a joke, 'Max,' Al said.

George laughed.

'You don't have to laugh,' Max said to him. 'You don't have to laugh at all, see?'

'All right,' said George.

'So he thinks it's all right.' Max turned to Al. 'He thinks it's all right. That's a good one.'

'Oh, he's a thinker,' Al said. They went on eating.

'What's the bright boy's name down the counter?' Al asked Max.

'Hey, bright boy,' Max said to Nick. 'You go around on the other side of the counter with your boy friend.'

'What's the idea?' Nick asked.

'There isn't any idea.'

'You better go around, bright boy,' Al said. Nick went around behind the counter.

'What's the idea?' George asked.

'None of your damn business, Al said. 'Who's out in the kitchen?'

'The nigger.'

'What do you mean the nigger?'

'The nigger that cooks.'

'Tell him to come in.'

'What's the idea?'

'Tell him to come in.'

'Where do you think you are?'

'We know damn well where we are,' the man called Max said. 'Do we look silly?'

'You talk silly,' Al said to him. 'What the hell do you argue with this kid for? Listen,' he said to George, 'tell the nigger to come out here.'

'What are you going to do to him?'

'Nothing. Use your head, bright boy. What would we do to a nigger?'

George opened the slit that opened back into the kitchen.

'Sam,' he called. 'Come in here a minute.'

The door to the kitchen opened and the nigger came in.

'What was it?' he asked. The two men at the counter took a look at him.

'All right, nigger. You stand right there,' Al said.

Sam, the nigger, standing in his apron, looked at the two men sitting at the counter. 'Yes, sir,' he said. Al got down from his stool.

'I'm going back to the kitchen with the nigger and bright boy,' he said. 'Go on back to the kitchen, nigger. You go with him, bright boy.' The little man walked after Nick and Sam, the cook, back into the kitchen. The door shut after them. The man called Max sat at the counter opposite George. He didn't look at George but looked in the mirror that ran along back of the counter. Henry's had been made over from a saloon into a lunch counter.

'Well, bright boy,' Max said, looking into the mirror, 'why don't you say something?'

'What's it all about?'

'Hey, Al,' Max called, 'bright boy wants to know what it's all about.'

'Why don't you tell him?' Al's voice came from the kitchen.

'What do you think it's all about?'

'I don't know.'

'What do you think?'

Max looked into the mirror all the time he was talking.

'I wouldn't say.'

'Hey, Al, bright boy says he wouldn't say what he thinks it's all about.'

'I can hear you, all right,' Al said from the kitchen. He had propped open the slit that dishes passed through into the kitchen with a catsup bottle. 'Listen, bright boy,' he said from the kitchen to George. 'Stand a little farther along the bar. You move a little to the left, Max.' He was like a photographer arranging for a group picture.

'Talk to me, bright boy,' Max said. 'What do you think's going to happen?'

George did not say anything.

'I'll tell you,' Max said. 'We're going to kill a Swede. Do you know a big Swede named Ole Anderson?'

'Yes.'

He comes here to eat every night, don't he?'

'Sometimes he comes here.'

'He comes here at six o'clock, don't he?'

'If he comes.'

'We know all that, bright boy,' Max said. 'Talk about something else. Ever go to the movies?'

'Once in a while.'

'You ought to go to the movies more. The movies are fine for a bright boy like you.'

'What are you going to kill Ole Anderson for? What did he ever do to you?'

'He never had a chance to do anything to us. He never even seen us.'

'And he's only going to see us once,' Al said from the kitchen.

'What are you going to kill him for, then?' George asked.

'We're killing him for a friend. Just to oblige a friend, bright boy.'

'Shut up,' said Al from the kitchen. 'You talk too goddam much.'

'Well, I got to keep bright boy amused. Don't I, bright boy?'

'You talk too damn much,' Al said. 'The nigger and my bright boy are amused by themselves. I got them tied up like a couple of girl friends in the convent.'

'I suppose you were in a convent?'

'You never know.'

'You were in a kosher convent. That's where you were.'

George looked up at the clock.

'If anybody comes in you tell them the cook is off, and if they keep after it, you tell them you'll go back and cook yourself. Do you get that, bright boy?'

'All right,' George said. 'What you going to do with us afterwards?'

'That'll depend,' Max said. 'That's one of those things you never know at the time.'

George looked up at the clock. It was a quarter past six. The door from the street opened. A street-car motorman came in.

'Hello, George,' he said. 'Can I get supper?'

'Sam's gone out,' George said. 'He'll be back in about half an hour.'

'I'd better go up the street,' the motorman said. George looked at the clock. It was twenty minutes past six.

'That was nice, bright boy,' Max said. 'You're a regular little gentleman.'

'He knew I'd blow his head off,' Al said from the kitchen.

'No,' said Max. 'It ain't that. Bright boy is nice. He's nice boy. I like him.'

At six-fifty-five George said, 'He's not coming.'

Two other people had been in the lunch-room. Once George had gone out to the kitchen and made a ham-and-egg sandwich 'to go' that a man wanted to take with him. Inside the kitchen he saw Al, his derby hat tipped back, sitting on a stool beside the wicket with the muzzle of a sawed-off shotgun resting on the ledge. Nick and the cook were back to back in the corner, a towel tied in each of their mouths. George had cooked the sandwich, wrapped it up in oiled paper, put it in a bag, brought it in, and the man had paid for it and gone out.

'Bright boy can do everything,' Max said. 'He can cook everything. You'd make some girl a nice wife, bright boy.'

'Yes?' George said. 'Your friend, Ole Andreson, isn't going to come.'

'We'll give him ten minutes,' Max said.

Max watched the mirror and the clock. The hands of the clock marked seven o'clock and then five minutes past seven.

'Come on, Al,' said Max. 'We better go. He's not coming.'

'Better give him five minutes,' Al said from the kitchen.

In the five minutes a man came in, and George explained that the cook was sick.

'Why the hell don't you get another cook?' the man asked.

'Aren't you running a lunch-counter?' He went out.

'Come on, Al,' Max said.

'What about the two bright boys and the nigger?'

'They're all right.'

'You think so?'

'Sure. We're through with it.'

'I don't like it,' said Al. 'It's a copy. You talk too much.'

'Oh, what the hell,' said Max. 'We got to keep amused, haven't we?'

'You talk too much, all the same,' Al said. He came out from the kitchen. The cut-off barrels of the shotgun made a slight bulge under the waist of his too tight-fitting overcoat. He straightened his coat with his gloved hands.

'So long, bright boy,' he said to George. 'You got a lot of luck.'

'That's the truth,' Max said. 'You ought to play the races, bright boy.'

The two of them went out the door. George watched them, through the window, pass under the arc-light and cross the street. In their tight overcoats and derby hats they looked like a vaudeville team. George went back through the swinging-door into the kitchen and untied Nick and the cook.

'I don't want any more of that,' said Sam, the cook. 'I don't want any more of that.'

Nick stood up. He had never had a towel in his mouth before.

'Say,' he said. 'What the hell?' He was trying to swagger it off.

'They were going to kill Ole Andreson,' George said. 'They were going to shoot him when he came in to eat.'

'Ole Andreson?'

'Sure.'

The cook felt the corners of his mouth with his thumbs.

'They all gone?' he asked.

'Yeah,' said George. 'They're gone now.'

'I don't like it,' said the cook. 'I don't like any of it all.'

'Listen,' George said to Nick. 'You better go see Ole Andreson.'

'All right.'

'You better not have anything to do with it at all,' Sam, the cook, said. 'You better stay way out of it.'

'Don't go if you don't want to,' George said.

'Mixing up in this ain't going to get you anywhere,' the cook said.

'You stay out of it.'

'I'll go see him,' Nick said to George. 'Where does he live?'

The cook turned away.

'Little boys always know what they want to do,' he said.

'He lives up at Hirsch's rooming-house,' George said to Nick.

'I'll go up there.'

Outside the arc-light shone through the bare branches of a tree. Nick walked up the street beside the car-tracks and turned at the next arc-light down a side-street. Three houses up the street was Hirsch's rooming-house. Nick walked up the two steps and pushed the bell. A woman came to the door.

'Is Ole Andreson here?'

'Do you want to see him?'

'Yes, if he's in.'

Nick followed the woman up a flight of stairs and back to the end of a corridor. She knocked on the door.

'Who is it?'

'It's somebody to see you, Mr. Anderson,' the woman said.

'It's Nick Adams.'

'Come in.'

Nick opened the door and went into the room. Ole Andreson was lying on the bed with all his clothes on. He had been a heavyweight prize-fighter and he was too long for the bed. He lay with his head on two pillows. He did not look at Nick.

'What was it?' he asked.

'I was up at Henry's,' Nick said, 'and two fellows came in and tied up me and the cook, and they said they were going to kill you.'

It sounded silly when he said it. Ole Andreson said nothing.

'They put us out in the kitchen,' Nick went on. 'They were going to shoot you when you came in to supper.'

Ole Andreson looked at the wall and did not say anything.

'George thought I better come and tell you about it.'

'There isn't anything I can do about it,' Ole Andreson said.

'I'll tell you what they were like.'

'I don't want to know what they were like,' Ole Andreson said. He looked at the wall. 'Thanks for coming to tell me about it.'

'That's all right.'

Nick looked at the big man lying on the bed.

'Don't you want me to go and see the police?'

'No,' Ole Andreson said. 'That wouldn't do any good.'

'Isn't there something I could do?'

'No. There ain't anything to do.'

'Maybe it was just a bluff.'

'No. It ain't just a bluff.'

Ole Andreson rolled over towards the wall.

'The only thing is,' he said, talking towards the wall, 'I just can't make up my mind to go out. I been in here all day.'

'Couldn't you get out of town?'

'No,' Ole Andreson said. 'I'm through with all that running around.'

He looked at the wall.

'There ain't anything to do now.'

'Couldn't you fix it up some way?'

'No. I got in wrong.' He talked in the same flat voice. 'There ain't anything to do. After a while I'll make up my mind to go out.'

'I better go back and see George,' Nick said.

'So long,' said Ole Andreson. He did not look towards Nick.

'Thanks for coming around.'

Nick went out. As he shut the door he saw Ole Andreson with all his clothes on, lying on the bed looking at the wall.

'He's been in his room all day,' the landlady said downstairs. 'I guess he don't feel well.' I said to him: "Mr. Andreson, you ought to go out and take a walk on a nice fall day like," but he didn't feel like it.'

'He doesn't want to go out.'

'I'm sorry he don't feel well,' the woman said. 'He's an awfully nice man. He was in the ring, you know.'

'I know it.'

'You'd never know it except from the way his face is,' the woman said. They stood talking just inside the street door.

'He's just as gentle.'

'Well, good night, Mrs. Hirsch,' Nick said.

'I'm not Mrs. Hirsch,' the woman said. 'She owns the place. I just look after it for her. I'm Mrs. Bell.'

'Well good night, Mrs. Bell,' Nick said.

'Good night,' the woman said.

Nick walked up the dark street to the corner under the arc-light, and then along the car-tracks to Henry's eating-house.

George was inside, back of the counter.

'Did you see Ole?'

'Yes,' said Nick. 'He's in his room and he won't get out.'

The cook opened the door from the kitchen when he heard Nick's voice.

'I don't even listen to it,' he said and shut the door.

'Did you tell him about it?' George asked.

'Sure. I told him but he knows what it's all about.'

'What's he going to do?'

'Nothing.'

'They'll kill him.'

'I guess they will.'

'He must have got mixed up in something in Chicago.'

'I guess so,' said Nick.

'It's a hell of a thing.'

'It's an awful thing,' Nick said.

They did not say anything. George reached down for a towel and wiped the counter.

'I wonder what he did?' Nick said.

'Double-crossed somebody. That's what *they* kill them for.'

'I'm going to get out of this town,' Nick said.

'Yes,' said George. 'That's a good thing to do.'

'I can't stand to think about him waiting in the room and knowing he's going to get it. It's too damned awful.'

'Well,' said George, 'you better not think about it.'

THE AUTHOR

Ernest Hemingway (1898-1962) was born and raised in Oak Park, Illinois. Following World War I, during which he was wounded while serving as a volunteer ambulance driver, Hemingway returned to Europe as a foreign correspondent for the *Toronto Star*. While in Paris, he joined the many artists and intellectuals who comprised the so-called lost generation of expatriates. Hemingway's fiction career began in the mid-1920s with the publication of his first collection of short stories: *In Our Time* (1924), and his famous novel of the lost generation, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). His other major works include *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940), and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952). Hemingway's deceptively simple literary style, with its crisp "masculine" dialogue, and his insistence on the active, sensuous life made him one of the most popular and widely read of all modern American writers and a legend during his own lifetime.

A REVIEW

Jackson J. Benson admires Ernest Hemingway for using his technique of writing a short story as "the inevitable doom that overtakes nearly anonymous people in nearly anonymous settings." In *"The Killers"* Hemingway in his typical unemotional and professional style creates an atmosphere wherein isolated and nearly anonymous characters are put to illustrate understanding and perception.

In the story, Hemingway introduces two men, Al and Max, who go to a restaurant to kill Ole Andreson to oblige a friend, as if killing a human being is such a spurious, negligible, and un-consequential affair. Ole Andreson occasionally visits the Restaurant for dinners; but that particular evening he does not come. They leave the place but also leave behind them a looming shadow of death under which a reader experiences horror. Ole Andreson is an isolated person who because of certain reasons has given up and is ready to accept death not because he is coward but because he is tired of running from death, a resolve he makes to get himself rid of the looming shadow of death. A solemn acquiescence to death ennoble his mind, and he develops a spiritual readiness to accept an eventuality. The restlessness is projected not in the mind of character but that of the reader.

In a very simple, direct, but effective language, E. Hemingway creates a very powerful impact of death. His style keeps the reader constantly in touch with its diction, and the rhythm of the ordinary dialogue.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Chicken Croquettes	chicken fried in deep fat until browned
Derby hat	a bowler hat
Wicket	slit; a small window or opening
Propped	supported
Sloppy	wet; muddy; wishy-washy
Vaudeville	a play interspersed with dances and songs & usually comic
Swagger	talking with an overweening air superiority
Rooming House	a house with furnished rooms to-let

2

RAPPACCINI'S DAUGHTER

Nathaniel Hawthorne

& A young man named Giovanni Guasconti came, very long ago, from the south of Italy to study at the University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but little money in his pocket, went to live in a high and ill-lighted room of an old building which looked as if it had been the place of a Paduan noble. Giovanni sighed heavily as he looked around the ill-furnished apartment.

Old Lady Lisabetta had been won by the youth's beauty of person and was kindly attempting to give the room a better appearance. "Holy Mother, sir!" she cried, "what a sigh was that to come out of a young man's heart! Do you find this old palace sad? For the love of Heaven, then, put your head out of the window, and you will see sunshine as bright as that which you left in Naples."

Guasconti did as the old woman urged, but could not quite agree with her that the Paduan sunshine was as cheerful as that of southern Italy. Such as it was, however, it fell upon a garden beneath the window, which contained a number of plants and seemed to have been tended with great care.

"Does this garden belong to the house?" asked Giovanni.

"Heaven prevent it, sir, unless it contained better plants than any that grow there now," answered old Lisabetta. "No, that garden is cared for by the hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini, the famous doctor, who surely has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said that he makes these plants into medicines that are as

powerful as magic. Often you may see the doctor at work, and sometimes his daughter, too, gathering the strange flowers that grow in the garden."

The old woman, having now done what she could for the appearance of the room, took her departure.

Giovanni still found no better occupation than to look down into the garden beneath his window. From its appearance, he judged it to be a garden for the study of plants. Or, it might once have been the pleasure place of a wealthy family; for there was the ruin of a stone fountain in the center, made with unusual art but now all broken. The water, however, continued to flow into the sunshine as cheerfully as ever.

All about the pool into which the water flowed grew different plants with huge leaves, and in some instances, with magnificent flowers. There was one bush in particular, set in a stone jar in the middle of the pool, that bore many purple flowers, each of which had the richness of a jewel. The whole together made a show so bright that it seemed enough to light up the garden, even had there been no sunshine. Every portion of the garden was peopled with plants, which, if less beautiful, still bore signs of great care. It seemed as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that tended them.

While Giovanni stood at the window he heard a noise behind a curtain of leaves, and noticed that a person was at work in the garden. His figure soon came into view, and showed itself to be that of no common laborer, but a tall, thin, sickly-looking man, dressed in black. He was beyond the middle time of life, with gray hair, and a face marked with learning but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

This scientific gardener examined every plant which grew in his path with the greatest care. Nevertheless, he did not actually touch the plants. Instead, he avoided their touch, or the direct breathing of their smells; for the man seemed to be working as among poisonous animals, or evil spirits. It was

strangely frightening to the young man to see this air of insecurity in a person working in a garden, that most simple of human tasks.

The untrustful gardener protected his hands with a pair of thick gloves. Nor were there his only defense. When, in his walk through the garden, he came to the magnificent plant that hung its purple jewels beside the stone fountain, he placed a covering over his mouth and nose; but, finding his task still too full of danger, he drew back, uncovered his face, and called loudly, but in the weak voice of a sick person:

"Beatrice! Beatrice!"

"Here I am, my father. What do you wish?" cried a rich and youthful voice from the window of the opposite house — a voice as rich as a sunset. "Are you in the garden?"

"Yes, Beatrice," answered the gardener, "and I need your help."

Soon there came out from under a stone doorway a young girl, dressed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers. She looked full of life, health, and energy. Yet Giovanni's fancy must have grown serious while he looked down into the garden. The impression which the fair stranger made upon him was as if there was another flower, the human sister of those vegetable ones. She seemed as beautiful as they, more beautiful than the riches of them, but still to be touched only with a glove, and not to be approached without a covered face. As Beatrice came down the garden path, it was observable that she handled and breathed the smell of several of the plants which her father had most carefully avoided.

"Here, Beatrice," said the latter, "see what you can do for our chief treasure. Sick as I am, it might cost my life to approach it as closely as circumstances demand. Hereafter, I fear, this plant must be entrusted to your charge alone."

"And gladly will I attempt it," cried again the rich tones of the young lady, as she bent towards the magnificent plant and

put her arms around it. "Yes, my sister, my splendor, it shall be Beatrice's task to nurse and serve you, and you shall reward her with your kisses and sweet breath, which to her is as the breath of life."

Giovanni, at his window up above, rubbed his eyes and almost doubted whether it were a girl tending her favorite flower, or one sister performing the duties of love to another. The scene soon ended. Whether Dr. Rappaccini had finished his labors in the garden, or that his watchful eye had caught the stranger's face, he now took his daughter's arm and went away. Giovanni, closing the window, went to his bed and dreamed of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different, and yet the same, both containing some strange danger.

But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to correct whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgement, we may have fallen into during the setting of the sun, or among the shadows of the night, or in the moonlight. Giovanni's first movement, on rising from sleep, was to throw open the window and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so full of mysteries. He was surprised and a little ashamed to find how real and matter-of-fact it proved to be, in the first rays of the sun. The young man was glad that, in the heart of the city, he had the privilege of overlooking this beautiful spot. It would serve, he said to himself, to keep him in touch with Nature.

During the day he paid his respects to Signor Pietro Baglioni, professor of medicine in the university, a doctor of great fame, to whom Giovanni had brought a letter of introduction. The professor was an older person, apparently of a happy and light-hearted nature. He kept the young man to dinner, and made himself very pleasant by the freedom and liveliness of his conversation, especially when warmed by a bottle or two of Tuscan wine. Giovanni, thinking that men of science, living in the same city, must be on familiar terms with one another, took an opportunity to mention the name of Dr. Rappaccini. But the professor did not reply with so much friendliness as he had expected.

"It would not be worth of a professor or medicine," said Signor Pietro Baglioni, "to keep from praising a doctor so skilled as Rappaccini; but on the other hand, I should not permit you, Signor Giovanni, the son of an ancient friend, to form wrong ideas respecting a man who might hereafter chance to hold your life and death in his hands. The truth is, our worshipful Dr. Rappaccini has as much science as any professor in Padua, or all Italy; but there are certain serious doubts as to his character."

"And what are they?" asked the young man.

"It is said of him," said the professor with a smile, "that he cares more for science than for mankind. Sick people are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would destroy human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding to scientific knowledge."

"He is an awful man indeed," remarked Guasconti. "And yet, worshipful professor, is it not a noble spirit? Are there many men who have so spiritual a love of science?"

"Fortunately, there are not. It is his belief that all virtues of the science of medicine are contained in vegetable poisons. These he grows with his own hands, and is said even to have produced new kinds of poison, more full of danger than those found in Nature."

"I know not, most learned professor," replied Giovanni, "how dearly this doctor may love his art; but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter."

"Aha!" cried the professor, with a laugh. "So now our friend Giovanni's secret is out. You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about, though half a dozen have ever had the good fortune to see her face. I know little of the Signore Beatrice except that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science. Other foolish things are said about her, but they are not worth talking about or listening to. So now, Signore Giovanni, drink off your glass of wine."

Guasconti returned to his room somewhat heated with the wine, which caused his brain to swim with strange imaginings about Dr. Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice. On his way, happening to pass by a flower shop, he bought some fresh flowers.

Going up to his room, he seated himself near the window, but within the shadow thrown by the wall, so that he could look down into the garden with little chance of being discovered. At first, the scene beneath his eye was empty. The strange plants were sleeping in the sunshine, and now and then nodding gently to one another. Soon, however, — as Giovanni had half hoped, half feared would be the case — a figure appeared beneath in the stone door, and came between the rows of plants, breathing their smells. On again beholding Beatrice, the young man surprised to see how much more beautiful she was than he remembered her to be. Her face, being now more revealed than on the former occasion, showed simplicity and sweetness, qualities that had not entered into his idea of her character. Nor did he fail again to observe the likeness between the beautiful girl and the magnificent bush that hung its jewel like flowers over the fountain.

Approaching the bush, she threw her arms around it.

"Give me your breath, my sister," exclaimed Beatrice; "for I am faint with common air. And give me this flower, that I may place it close beside my heart."

With these words, the beautiful daughter of Rappaccini picked one of the richest flowers of the bush, and was about to place it upon her breast. But now, unless Giovanni's senses were affected by the wine, a strange thing occurred. A small orange-colored animal chanced to come along the path, just at the feet of Beatrice. Giovanni was not sure, but it appeared to him that a drop or two of water from the flower fell upon the animal's head. In an instant it lay motionless in the sunshine. Beatrice made the sign of the cross, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to place the flower upon her breast.

"Am I awake? Have I my senses?" said Giovanni to himself.

"What is this being? Beautiful shall I call her, or terrible?"

Beatrice now walked carelessly through the garden, approaching closer beneath Giovanni's window. At this moment here came a beautiful insect over the garden wall. This winged brightness seemed to be drawn by Beatrice, and flew about her head. Now, it could be that Giovanni's eyes fooled him, but, while Beatrice was gazing at the insect with childish delight, it grew faint and fell at her feet. It was dead from no cause that he could see, unless it were her breath. Again Beatrice crossed herself and sighed heavily as she bent over the dead insect.

A quick movement of Giovanni drew her eyes to the window. There she beheld the beautiful head of the young man gazing down upon her. Scarcely knowing what he did, Giovanni threw down the flowers which he was holding in his hand.

"Signora," said he, "there are some pure and healthful flowers. Wear them for the sake of Giovanni Guasconti."

"Thanks, Signor," replied Beatrice, with her rich voice. "I accept your gift, and would repay it with this precious purple flower; but if I throw it into the air it will not reach you. So Signor Guasconti must content himself with my thanks."

She lifted the flowers from the ground, and then, as if ashamed at having replied to a stranger's greeting, passed hurriedly through the garden. But few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni that his beautiful flowers were already beginning to die in her grasp. But perhaps he did not see clearly.

For many days afterward the young man avoided the window that looked into Dr. Rappaccini's garden. He felt that he had put himself within the influence of a strange power by the words which he had exchanged with Beatrice. Whether or not Beatrice possessed those terrible qualities, that deadly breath, she had at least introduced a fine poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor terror; but a combination of both. Blessed are all simple emotions, be

they dark or bright! It is the mixture of the two that comes from the region of hell.

Sometimes Giovanni tried to end the fever of his spirit by a rapid walk through the streets of Padua or beyond its gates. One day his arm was seized by a man who recognized him.

"Signor Giovanni! Stop, my young friend!" cried he. "Have you forgotten me?"

It was Baglioni, whom Giovanni had avoided ever since their first meeting, for fear that the professor would look too deeply into his secrets. Giovanni spoke like a man in a dream.

"Yes, I am Giovanni Guasconti. You are Professor Pietro Baglioni. Now let me pass!"

"Not yet, not yet, Signor Giovanni Guasconti," said the professor, smiling, but at the same time studying the youth with his glance. "What! did I grow up side by side with your father? and shall his son pass me like a stranger in these old streets of Padua? Stand still, Signor Giovanni; for we must have a word or two before we part."

"Quickly, then, most worshipful professor, quickly," said Giovanni, with feverish lack of patience. "Does not your worship see that I am in a hurry?"

Now, while he was speaking there came a man in black along the street, moving like a person in poor health. His face was all overspread with a most sickly and yellow color, but yet with a sharp expression. As he passed, this person exchanged a cold and distant greeting with Baglioni, but fixed his eyes upon Giovanni.

"It is Dr. Rappaccini!" whispered the professor when the stranger had passed. "Has he ever seen your face before?"

"Not that I know," answered Giovanni, starting at the name.

He has seen you! he must have seen you!" said Baglioni, quickly. "For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his! Signor Giovanni,

upon my life, you are the subject of one of Rappaccini's experiments!"

"Will you make a fool of me?" cried Giovanni. "That, signor professor, would be an untoward experiment."

"Patience! patience!" replied the professor. "I tell you, my poor Giovanni, that Rappaccini has a scientific interest in you. You have fallen into fearful hands! And the Signora Beatrice — what part does she act in this mystery?"

But there Guasconti broke away and was gone before the professor could again seize his arm. He looked after the young man and shook his head.

"This must not be," said Baglioni to himself. "The youth is the son of my old friend, and must not come to any harm."

Giovanni found himself at last at the door of his building. As he entered he was met by old Lisabetta, who smiled and tried to gain his attention. He turned his eyes full upon the old face, but seemed not to behold it. The old woman, therefore, laid her grasp upon his coat.

"Signor! signor!" whispered she, still with a smile over her face. "Listen, signor! There is a private entrance into the garden!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Giovanni, turning quickly about. "A private entrance into Dr. Rappaccini's garden?"

"Quiet! quiet! not so loud!" whispered Lisabetta, putting her hand over his mouth. "Yes; into the worshipful doctor's garden, where you may see all his fine bushes. Many a young man in Padua would give gold to be permitted among those flowers."

Giovanni put a piece of gold into her hand.

"Show me the way," said he.

The thought crossed his mind that Lisabetta might perhaps be connected with an experiment of Dr. Rappaccini. But such a thought was not enough to hold him back. The instant that he saw the possibility of approaching Beatrice, it seemed most

necessary to do so. It mattered not whether she were from heaven or hell.

He paused, hesitated, turned half about, but again went on. His old guide led him along several dark halls, and finally unlocked a door. Giovanni stepped forth and found himself beneath his own window in the open area of Dr. Rappaccini's garden.

We often find ourselves calm when the impossible happens. So it was now with Giovanni. Day after day he had dreamed feverishly of meeting Beatrice face to face, in this very garden. But now there was a strange calm within his breast. He threw a glance around the garden to discover if Beatrice or her father were present, and seeing that he was alone, began to observe the plants.

The appearance of all of them troubled him. There was scarcely a plant which a wanderer would not have been frightened to find growing wild in the forest. Several gave the impression that they were no longer of God's making. They were probably the result of experiment. Giovanni recognized but two or three plants, and those were of a kind that he well knew to be poisonous. While busy with these observations he heard a slight noise, and, turning, beheld Beatrice coming from beneath a doorway.

Giovanni did not know how he should feel at being surprised there, but Beatrice's manner placed him at his ease. She came lightly along the path and met him near the broken fountain. There was surprise in her face, but brightened by a simple and kind expression of pleasure.

"You are not a stranger to flowers, signor," said Beatrice, with a smile, thinking of those which he had thrown her from the window. "It is not surprising, therefore, if the slight of my father's collection has brought you to take a nearer view. If he were here, he could tell you many strange and interesting facts as to the nature and habits of these plants; for he has spent a lifetime in such studies, and this garden is his world."

"And yourself, lady," observed Giovanni, "if fame says true, are likewise skilled in their virtues. If you would be my teacher, I should learn more than if taught by Signor Rappaccini himself."

"Do people say that I am skilled in my father's science of plants? No; though I have grown up among these flowers, I know no more of them than their colors and smell; and sometimes I would free myself of even that small knowledge. There are many flowers here that shock me and do not please me when they meet my eye. But pray, signor, do not believe these stories about my science. Believe nothing of me save what you see with your own eyes."

"And must I believe all that I have seen with my own eyes?" said Giovanni, pointedly, thinking of former scenes. "No, signora; bid me believe nothing save what comes from your own lips."

It would appear that Beatrice understood him; but she looked full into Giovanni's eyes, with a queenlike air.

"I do so bid you, signor," she replied. "The words of Beatrice Rappaccini's lips are true from the heart."

While she spoke there was a smell in the air which the young man scarcely dared to breathe. A faintness passed like a shadow over Giovanni, and as he gazed into the beautiful girl's eyes, he felt no more doubt or fear.

Beatrice now became gay, and appeared to delight in her conversation with the youth, even as the maiden of a lonely island might have done, in talking with a voyager from the outside world. Evidently her experience of life had been contained within the limits of that garden. She talked now about matters as simple as the daylight or summer clouds. She asked questions about the city, or Giovanni's distant home, his friends, his mother, and his sisters — questions that Giovanni answered as if to a child. From time to time there crossed in the young man's mind a sense of wonder that he should be conversing with

her like a brother, and should find her so human and so maidenlike.

Now, after many turns among the garden paths, they had come to the broken fountain, beside which grew the magnificent bush. A smell came from it which Giovanni recognized as being similar to Beatrice's breath, but much more powerful. As her eyes fell upon it, Giovanni beheld her press her hand to her breast as if her heart were beating suddenly and painfully.

"For the first time in my life," she whispered, speaking to the plant, "I had forgotten you."

"I remember, signora," said Giovanni, "that you once promised me one of these living jewels in return for the flowers which I threw at your feet. Permit me now to pick it."

He made a step towards the bush with extended hand; but Beatrice rushed forward with a cry that went through his heart like a sword. She caught his hand and drew it back with her whole strength.

"Touch it not!" she exclaimed. "Not for your life! It is poisonous!"

Then, hiding her face, she ran away. As Giovanni followed her with his eyes, he beheld the figure of Dr. Rappaccini, who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.

No sooner was Guasconti alone in his room than thoughts of Beatrice came to his mind. She was human, gentle, and maidenly; worthy to be worshipped. Whatever had looked ugly was now beautiful.

Thus did he spend the night and did not fall asleep until the dawn. Up rose the sun in due time, and, casting its rays upon the young man's eyes, awoke him to a sense of pain. He had a burning feeling in his right hand — the very hand which Beatrice had grasped in her own, when he was on the point of picking one of the jewel-like flowers. On the back of that hand there was now a purple mark.

How love does hold its faith! Giovanni wrapped a handkerchief about his hand and wondered what evil thing had bitten him, and soon forgot his pain among thoughts of Beatrice.

After the first meeting, there was a second, a third, a fourth; unto the daily meeting with Beatrice in the garden made upon his whole life. Nor was it otherwise with the daughter of Rappaccini. She watched for the youth's appearance, and flew to his side as if they had been playmates from early childhood. If by any chance he failed to come at the appointed hour, she stood beneath the window and called in her rich voice: "Giovanni! Giovanni! Why do you delay? Come down!" And down he hurried into that heaven of poisonous flowers.

By all signs, they loved; and yet there had been no press of lips, no touch of hands. On the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed to overstep the limit, Beatrice grew so sad, that not a spoken word was needed to stop him. At such time, his love grew thin and faint. But when Beatrice's face brightened again, she was once more the beautiful girl whom he felt that he knew.

A long time had now passed since Giovanni's last meeting with Baglioni. One morning, however, he was unpleasantly surprised by a visit from the professor, whom he had scarcely thought of for whole weeks, and would willingly have forgotten still longer. He could suffer no companions except upon condition of their perfect sympathy with his present state of feeling. Such sympathy was not to be expected from Professor Baglioni.

The visitor talked carelessly for a few moments about the city and the university, and then took up another subject.

"I have been reading an old book lately," said he, "and met with a story that strangely interested me. Possibly you may remember it. It is of an Indian prince, who sent a beautiful woman as a present to Alexander the Great. She was beautiful as the dawn; but what especially marked her was her breath — richer than a garden of roses. Alexander, as was natural, fell in love at first sight with this magnificent stranger, but a certain

wise doctor, happening to be present, discovered a terrible secret in her."

"And what was that?" asked Giovanni, turning his eyes downward to avoid those of the professor.

"That this beautiful woman," continued Baglioni, "had been fed with poisons from her birth, until her whole nature was so used to them that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. Her love would have been poison. Is that not a marvelous story?"

"A childish story," answered Giovanni, nervously starting from his chair. "I wonder how your worship finds time to read such nonsense among your more serious studies."

"By the way" said the professor, looking uneasily about him, "what strange smell is this in your apartment? Is it from your gloves? It is faint, but sweet, and yet, after all, by no means agreeable. Were I to breathe it long, I think it would make me ill. It is like the breath of a flower; but I see no flowers in the room."

"Nor are there any," replied Giovanni, who had turned pale as the professor spoke; "nor, I think, is there any smell except in your worship's imagination."

"Our worshipful friend Rappaccini, as I have heard, uses such rich smells in his medicines. Doubtless, likewise the fair and learned Signora Beatrice would give to her patients drinks as sweet as a maiden's breath; but alas for him that drinks them!"

Giovanni's face showed many emotions. He tried hard to reply to Baglioni with a true lover's perfect faith.

"Signor professor," said he, "you were my father's friend; perhaps, too, it is your purpose to act a friendly part towards his son. I would feel nothing towards you save respect; but I pray you to observe, signor, that there is one subject on which we must not speak. You do not know the Signora Beatrice."

"Giovanni! my poor Giovanni!" answered the professor, with a calm expression of pity. "I know this unfortunate girl far better than you do. You shall hear the truth in respect to the

poisoner Rappaccini and his poisonous daughter; yes, poisonous as she is beautiful. Listen; for you shall not silence me. That old story of the Indian woman has become a truth by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini and in the person of the beautiful Beatrice."

Giovanni sighed and hid his face.

"Her father," continued Baglioni, "was not prevented by natural love from offering up his child in this terrible manner to his madness for science. For, let us do him justice, he is as true a man of science as ever there was. What, then, will be your fate? Beyond a doubt you have been selected as the material of some new experiment. Perhaps the result is to be death; perhaps it is a fate more awful still. Rappaccini, with what he calls the interest of science before his eyes, will hesitate at nothing."

"It is a dream," said Giovanru to himself; "surely it is a dream."

"But", continued the professor, "be of good cheer, son of my friend. It is not yet too late to save you. Possibly we may even succeed in bringing back this unfortunate child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father's madness has separated her. Behold this little silver bottle! It is well worthy to be a love gift to the fairest maid in Italy. But what it contains is most valuable. One little drop will make harmless the strongest poisons. Doubt not that it will have effect against those of Rappaccini. Give the bottle, and the precious liquid within it, to your Beatrice, and hopefully await the result."

Baglioni laid a small, delicately made silver bottle on the table and went away, leaving what he had said to produce its effect upon the young man's soul.

"We will defeat Rappaccini yet," thought he, smiling to himself, as he went down the stairs.

Throughout Giovanni's whole friendship with Beatrice, he had occasionally, as we have said, felt doubts as to her character. Yet, so completely had she made herself felt by him as a simple, natural, and most loving creature that the picture now painted by

Professor Baglioni looked strange and unbelievable. But now he was full of doubts. Not that he gave her up; but he did not trust her. He decided to make some test that should satisfy him, once and for all, whether she possessed terrible qualities of body and soul. If he could witness, at the distance of a few feet, the sudden dying of one fresh and healthful flower in Beatrice's hand, there would be no further question. With this idea he hurried to buy some flowers that were freshly picked.

It was now the customary hour of his daily meeting with Beatrice. Before going down into the garden, Giovanni looked at his figure in the looking glass. As he gazed, he said to himself that his face had never before possessed such healthy color, nor his eyes such life.

"At least," thought he, "her poison has not yet entered into my system. I am no flower to die in her grasp."

With that thought he turned his eyes on the flowers, which he had never once laid aside from his hand. A feeling of terror shot through his frame on noticing that those fresh flowers were already beginning to dry up. Giovanni grew white as stone, and stood motionless before the glass, staring at himself as at the likeness of something frightful. He remembered Baglioni's remark about the smell that seemed to fill the room. It must have been the poison in his breath! Then he started to tremble. Recovering from his fright, he began to watch with curious eye an insect that was moving on the wall — as active an insect as ever there was. Giovanni bent towards the insect and gave forth a deep, long breath. The insect fell dead to the floor.

"Accursed! accursed!" cried Giovanni to himself. "Have you grown so poisonous that this insect dies by your breath?"

At that moment a rich, sweet voice came floating up from the garden.

"Giovanni!" Giovanni! It is past the hour! Why do you delay? Come down!"

"Yes," said Giovanni softly. "She is the only being whom my breath may not kill! Would that it might!"

He rushed down, and in an instant was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago his anger and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to kill her by a glance; but with her actual presence, there came memories of her sweet and maidenly nature. Her presence had not utterly lost its magic.

Beatrice sensed immediately that there was a gulf of blackness between them which neither he nor she could close. They walked on together, sad and silent, and came thus to the stone fountain and to its pool of water on the ground, in the middle of which grew the plant that bore the jewel-like flowers. Giovanni was frightened at the eager enjoyment — the hunger with which he found himself breathing the smell of the flowers.

"Beatrice," asked he, suddenly, "where did this plant come from?"

"My father created it," answered she, with simplicity.

"Created it! created it!" repeated Giovanni. "What do you mean, Beatrice?"

"He is a man fearfully wise in the secrets of Nature," replied Beatrice; "and, at the hour when I first drew breath, this plant sprang from the soil, the child of his science, of his brain, while I was but his earthly child. Do not approach it!" she continued, observing with terror that Giovanni was drawing nearer to the bush. "It has qualities that you little dream of. But I, dearest Giovanni, grew up and flowered with the plant and was fed by its breath. It was my sister, and I loved it with a human love; for, alas! — have you not guessed it? — there was an awful fate."

Here Giovanni looked so darkly upon her that Beatrice paused and trembled. But her faith in his tenderness reassured her.

"There was an awful fate," she continued, "the effect of my father's mad love of science, which separated me from all society of my kind. Until Heaven sent you, dearest Giovanni, oh, how lonely was your poor Beatrice!"

Giovanni's anger broke forth like a lightning flash out of a dark cloud.

"Accursed one!" cried he, "and you have cut me off likewise from all the warmth of life and drawn me into your region of unspeakable terror!"

"Giovanni!" exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face.

"Yes, poisonous thing!" repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. "You have done it! You have filled my blood with poison! You have made me as hateful, as ugly, and as deadly a creature as yourself. Now, if our breath be happily as deadly to ourselves as to all others, let us join our lips in one kiss of unspeakable hatred, and so die."

"What has happened to me?" sighed Beatrice. "Holy Mother, pity me, a poor heart-broken child!"

"You — do you pray?" cried Giovanni, still with the same fierce anger. "Your very prayers, as they come from your lips, fill the air with death."

"Giovanni," said Beatrice, calmly, for her grief was beyond passion, "why do you join yourself with me thus in those terrible words? I, it is true, am the terrible thing you name me. But you, what have you to do but to go forth out of the garden and mix with your people, and forget that there ever was on earth such a beast as poor Beatrice?"

"Do you not know?" asked Giovanni. "Behold! this power have I gained from the pure daughter of Rappaccini."

There were many summer insects flying through the air in search of the food promised by the flower smells of the deadly garden. They circled round Giovanni's head and were evidently drawn towards him by the same influence which had drawn

them for an instant to several of the plants. He sent forth a breath among them, and smiled bitterly at Beatrice as at last twenty of the insects fell dead upon the ground.

"I see it! I see it!" cried Beatrice. "It is my father's deadly science! No, no, Giovanni; it was not I! Never! never! I dreamed only to love you and be with you a little time, and so to let you pass away, leaving but your memory in my heart; for Giovanni, believe it, though my body be fed with poison, my spirit is God's creature, and needs love as its daily food. But my father — he has united us in this fearful sympathy. Yes; step upon me, kill me! Oh, what is death after such words as yours? But it was not I. Not for the world would I have done it."

"Dear Beatrice," said he, approaching her, while she drew away as always at his approach, but now for a different reason, "dearest Beatrice, our fate is not yet without hope. Look! there is a medicine, powerful as a wise doctor has assured me. It contains elements the most opposite to those by which your awful father has brought this fate upon you and me. It is made of blessed plants. Shall we not drink it together, and thus be freed from evil?"

"Give it to me!" said Beatrice, extending her hand to receive the little silver bottle which Giovanni took from his breast. She added, with a strange tone, "I will drink; but do you await the result."

She put Baglioni's medicine to her lips; and, at the same moment, the figure of Rappaccini came out of the shadows and walked slowly towards the fountain. As he drew near, the pale man of science seemed to gaze with an expression of victory at the beautiful youth and maiden.

"My daughter," said Rappaccini, "you are no longer lonely in the world. Pick one of those precious jewels from your sister plant and bid your lover wear it in his breast. It will not harm him now. My science and the sympathy between you and him have so worked upon his system that he now stands apart from common men, as you do, daughter of my pride and victory, from

ordinary women. Pass on, then through the world, most dear to one another and fearful to all besides!"

"My father," said Beatrice weakly — and as she spoke she kept her hand upon her heart, — "why did you bring this terrible fate upon your child?"

"Terrible!" exclaimed Rappaccini. "What mean you, foolish girl? Do you consider it bad to possess marvelous gifts which no power nor strength can oppose — bad, to be as terrible as you are beautiful? Would you, then have preferred the condition of a weak woman, suffering all evil and giving none?"

"I would rather have been loved, not feared," sighed Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground. "but now it matters not. I am going, father, where the evil which you have given me will pass away like a dream — like the smell of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer be upon my breath among the flowers of Heaven. Good-bye, Giovanni! Your words of hatred are like stone within my heart; but they, too, will fall away as I rise to heaven. Oh, was there not, from the first, more poison in your nature than in mine?"

To Beatrice — so much had her earthly part been worked upon by Rappaccini's skill — as poison had been life, so the powerful medicine was death; and thus she died there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni. Just at the moment Professor Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of terror, to the thunderstricken man of science:

"Rappaccini! Rappaccini! and is this the result of your experiment!"

THE AUTHOR

Nathaniel Hawthorne: American short-story writer and novelist, born at Salem, Mass., in 1804, died at Plymouth, N.H., in 1864. Educated at Bowdoin College, where he met Longfellow, he spent twelve years at Salem, where he eventually made a name with *Twice-Told Tales* (1837). After working in the Boston Custom House, living briefly at Brook Farm, marrying and living at Concord, he became governor of the Port of Salem, where he wrote the famous novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), which was followed within two years by *The House of the Seven Gables* and *The Blithedale Romance*. He served as U.S. consul abroad, and in his last novel, *The Marble Faun*, used Rome as its setting. After being undervalued for a considerable time, Hawthorne is now regarded as one of America's representative novelists, and during recent years his work has been the subject of much close and appreciative criticism.

A REVIEW

"*Rappaccini's Daughter*" is a fantasy in which a great scientist cares "infinitely more for science than for mankind" and would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge." He sounds like a possessed man, so much absorbed in his studies and experiments that he is reft of his humanity. He can see nothing beyond himself. This obsession with such a paramount selfishness has put all his scientific research to wrong direction-----it has become a sorry affair. He has developed a fascination for power rather than an inclination for service.

Dr. Rappaccini develops a scientific formula by which certain poisons infiltrate in his daughter's system and make her immune to them, but at the same time they make her very touch deadly to anyone else. Unaware of this fact, a young student falls in love with her beauty but happens to watch her in the garden when she touches the flowers making them wither in her grasp. Stunned and bewildered he tries to strengthen a conviction that if "there is something truer and more real than that what we can see with the eyes and touch with the finger." He might be wrong, but then how can he possibly deny a truth, a beauty, an innocence, the best and the most powerful values and gifts of life, even though under the influence of evil so much prevalent on our lives.

The story has a double plot: one of Dr. Rappaccini's myopic fascination with science through its novel experimentation and his selfish inhuman way of sacrificing even his daughter and himself to see his experimentation successful. This has put the natural and the innocent up against the inhuman and the callous. The other plot is of the love of Beatrice and Giovanni which displays sincerity, innocence, and natural emotions. It is a plot in which the lovers meet a tragedy at the end when Beatrice dies and leaves a powerful sense of compassion to the reader in the face of the morbidity of the successful experimentation.

3

NAYA QANOOK (The New Act of 1935) THE NEW CONSTITUTION

Saadat Hassan Manto

Mangu the *tongawala* was considered a man of great wisdom among his friends. He had never seen the inside of a school, and in strictly academic terms was no more than a cipher, but there was nothing under the sun he did not know something about. All his fellow *tongawalas* at the *adda*, or *tonga stand*, were well aware of his versatility in worldly matters. He was always able to satisfy their curiosity about what was happening.

One day he overheard a couple of his fares discussing yet another outbreak of communal violence between Hindus and Muslims.

That evening when he returned to the *adda*, he looked perturbed. He sat down with his friends, took a long drag on the hookah, removed his khaki turban and said in a worried voice: 'It is no doubt the result of a holy man's curse that Hindus and Muslims keep slashing each other up every other day. I have heard it said by one of my elders that Akbar Badshah once showed disrespect to a saint, who cursed him in these words: "Get out of my sight! And, yes your Hindustan will always be plagued by riots and disorder." And you can see for yourselves.

Eversince the end of Akbar's raj, what else has India known but riots!

Ustad Mangu hated the British. He used to tell his friends that he hated them because they were ruling Hindustan against the will of the Indians and missed no opportunity to commit atrocities. However, the fact was that it was the *gora* soldiers of the cantonment who were responsible for Ustad Mangu's rather low opinion of the British. They used to treat him as if he were some lower creation of God, even worse than a dog. Nor was Ustad Mangu overly fond of their fair complexions. He used to experience near nausea when confronted by a white and ruddy *gora* soldier. 'Their red faces remind me of decaying carcasses,' he was fond of saying.

After a violent quarrel with a drunken *gora*, he used to remain depressed for days. He would return to his *adda* and curse them while smoking his hookah or his favourite brand of cigarettes with the picture of a plough on the packet.

'Look at them,' he would say, shaking his head, 'came to the house to fetch a candle and before you knew, they had taken it over. I can't stand the sight of them, these human monkeys. The way they order you around as if one was their father's slave!'

Sometimes, even after having abused them for hours, he would continue to feel enraged. And he would say to someone sitting next to him, 'Look at them...don't they seem like lepers? Something dead and rotting. I could knock them all out with one blow, but what can you do about their arrogance? Yesterday, there was one I ran into. I was so sick of his *gitpit* that I nearly smashed his head in, but then I restrained myself. I mean it would have been below my dignity to hit the wretch.'

He would wipe his nose with his sleeve and continue his diatribe. 'As God is my witness, I'm sick of humouring these Lat sahibs. Every time I look at their blighted faces, my blood begins to boil. Maybe, we need a new law to get rid of these people. Only that can save us, I swear on your life.'

One day Ustad Mangu picked up two fares from the district courts. He gathered from their conversation that there was going to be a new Act of India. They were discussing the soon-to-be-introduced Government of India Act 1935.

'It is said that from 1 April, there's going to be this new constitution. Do you think it will change everything?'

'Not everything, but they say a lot will change. The Indians would be free.'

'What about interest?' asked one. They were probably moneylenders who were in town for litigation.

'Well, frankly I don't know. Will have to ask a lawyer,' replied his friend.

Ustad Mangu was already in seventh heaven. Normally, he was in the habit of abusing his horse for being slow and was not averse to using the whip, but not today. Every now and then, he would look back at his two passengers, caress his moustache and loosen the reins affectionately. 'Come on son, let's show them what you can do. Let's go.'

After dropping his fares, he stopped at the Anarkali shop of his friend, Dino, the sweetmeat vendor. He ordered a large glass of *lassi*, drank it down in one gulp, belched with satisfaction and shouted; The hell with 'em'.

When he returned to the *adda* in the evening, none of his friends seemed to be around. He felt bitterly disappointed because he had been looking forward to sharing the great news with his audience. He had to tell someone that there was going to be a new constitution soon which would change everything.

For about half an hour, he paced around restlessly, his whip under his arm. His mind was on many things, good things that lay in the future. The news that a new constitution was to be given to the country had suddenly opened new possibilities. He had switched on all the lights in his brain to examine carefully the implications of the 1 April change in India. He felt thrilled. He even smiled to himself when he thought about interest. 'The new

constitution is going to be like boiling hot water which will destroy these bugs who suck the blood of the poor,' he said to himself.

He was very happy. The new constitution was going to force these white mice (for that was his name for the British) once and for all back into their miserable holes. No longer would they infest the earth.

When Nathoo, the bald-headed *tongawala* ambled in a while later, his turban tucked under his arm, Ustad Mangu shook his hand vigorously and said: 'I have great news for you. It's so good that it might make your hair grow back.'

He then went into a detailed description of the changes the new constitution was going to bring to India. 'You just wait and see. Things are going to happen. You have my word, this Russian king is bound to show them his paces.'

Ustad Mangu had heard many stories about the Communist system over the years. There were many things he liked about it, such as their new laws and even newer ideas. That was why he'd decided to link the king of Russia with the India Act. He was convinced that the changes being brought in on 1 April were a direct result of the influence of the Russian king. He was of course quite convinced that every country in the world was ruled by a king.

For some years, the Red Shirt movement in Peshawar had been much in the news. To Ustad Mangu, this movement had something to do with 'the king of Russia' and, naturally, with the new Government of India Act. There were also frequent reports of bomb blasts in various Indian cities. Whenever Ustad Mangu heard that so many had been caught for possessing explosives or so many were going to be tried by the Government on treason charges, he interpreted it all as a curtain-raiser for the new constitution.

One day he had two barristers at the back of his *tonga*. They were arguing loudly about the new constitution. One of them was saying: 'It is section 2 of the Act that I still can't make sense

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of. It relates to the federation of India. Well, no such federation exists in the world. From a political angle, it will amount to a disaster. As a matter of fact, what is being proposed is anything but a federation.'

Since most of this conversation was being carried on in English, Ustad Mangu was unable to follow it. However, it was his impression that these two barristers were opposed to the new Act and did not want India to be free. 'Toadies,' he muttered under his breath.

Three days after this incident, he picked up three students from the Government College who wanted to be taken to Mozang. They were talking about the new constitution.

'I think things are going to open up with the new Act. Just imagine, we are going to have elected assemblies and if Mr... gets elected, I'm bound to get a government job.'

'Oh! There are going to be many openings and much confusion, of course. I'm sure all of us will be able to lay our hands on something.'

'I couldn't agree more.'

'And, naturally, there's going to be a reduction in the number of all these thousands of unemployed graduates.'

This conversation was most thrilling as far as Ustad Mangu was concerned. The new constitution now appeared to him to be something bright and full of promise. The only thing he could compare the new constitution with was the splendid brass and gift paraphernalia he had purchased a couple of years ago for his *tonga* from Chaudhary Khuda Bux. The new constitution gave him the same nice, warm feeling.

In the weeks following, Ustad Mangu heard much about the changes, both for and against. However, his mind was quite made up. He was secure in his belief to let the first April come; everything would change.

At last the thirty-one days of March came to an end. There was a chill in the air as Ustad Mangu rose earlier than usual. He

went to the stable, set up his *tonga* and took to the road. He was extraordinarily happy today because he was going to witness with his own eyes the coming of the new constitution.

In the morning fog, he went round the broad and narrow streets of the city but everything had the same old and worn-out look. He wanted to see colour and light. There was nothing. He had bought a special new plume for his horse to celebrate the big day and it seemed to be the only bit of colour he could see. It had cost him a bit of money too.

The road lay black under his horse's hooves. The lamp posts looked the same. The shop signs had not changed. People moved about as if nothing new had happened. Perhaps it was too early in the morning. Most of the shops were closed. He consoled himself with the thought that the courts did not open until nine, and it was there the new constitution would be launched.

He was in front of the Government College when the tower clock struck nine, almost imperiously. The students walking in through the main entrance were all nicely dressed, but somehow they looked shabby to Ustad Mangu. He wanted to see something colourful and dramatic.

He moved his *tonga* towards the main shopping centre, the Anarkali. Half the shops were already open. There were crowds of people at sweetmeat stalls, and general traders were busy with their customers, their wares displayed invitingly in their windows. However, none of this had any interest whatsoever for Ustad Mangu. He wanted to see the new constitution as clearly as he could see his horse.

Ustad Mangu was one of those people who cannot stand the suspense of waiting. When he was going to get his first child, he had been unable to sit still. He wanted to see the child even before it was born. He just couldn't wait for things to take shape. He wanted everything to happen immediately.

Great leaders, in Ustad Mangu's view, were those who were profusely garlanded when taken out in procession. And if there was a few scuffles with the police during the proceedings,

the man went up even further in Ustad's estimation. He wanted to see the new constitution brought out with the same razzle-dazzle.

From Anarkali he moved back to the Mall. In front of the motor showroom, he found a fare for the cantonment. They settled the price and were soon on their way. Ustad Mangu was now hopeful that he might learn something about the new constitution in the cantonment.

His fare got down from the *tonga* and said Ustad Mangu stretched himself on the rear seat. He lit a cigarette and started thinking. This was one way he relaxed when he had the time. He wasn't looking for a new fare. He was only curious as to what had overtaken the new constitution.

Ustad Mangu was trying to work out if the present system of allotting *tonga* number plates would change with the new dispensation, when he saw a gora soldier standing next to a lamp-post.

His first instinct was not to take him. He hated these monkeys. However, it occurred to him that to refuse to take their money wouldn't be very wise either. 'Might as well recover what I've spent on the new plume,' he said to himself.

He turned round and without moving from his comfortable perch, asked in a leisurely manner: 'Sahib bahadur, where do you wish to be taken?'

He had spoken these words with undisguised irony. There was a smile on his face and he wished nothing better than the immediate demise of this impertinent gora.

The gora, who was trying to light a cigarette against the wind, turned and began to walk towards the *tonga*. They looked at each other, and Ustad Mangu felt as if they were two guns firing from point-blank range.

Finally he stepped down from his *tonga* all the while eyeing the soldier with mute fury.

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'Do you want to go or are you going to make trouble?' the *gora* asked in his pidgin Urdu.

'This swine I know,' Ustad Mangu said to himself. He was quite sure that it was the same man with whom he had had a quarrel the year before. The fellow had been drunk and had abused Ustad Mangu, who had borne the insults in silence. He wanted to smash the bastard's skull in but he knew that if the case went to court, it was he, the humble *tongawala*, who would get it in the neck.

'Where do you want to go?' Ustad Mangu asked, not forgetful of the fact that there was a new constitution in force in India now.

'The dancing girls' bazaar,' the *gora* answered.

'It will cost you five rupees,' Ustad Mangu said, and his thick moustache trembled.

'Five rupees! Are you out of your mind?' the *gora* screamed in disbelief.

'Yes, you heard me,' Ustad Mangu said, clenching his fist. 'Are you interested or do you merely want to waste my time?'

The *gora* remembered their last encounter and has chosen to pay no attention to Ustad Mangu's barrel-chested stance. He was determined to teach the man another lesson swagger stick brushing past the Indian's thigh.

Ustad Mangu looked down on the short-statured soldier with great contempt. Then he raised his arm and hit him heavily on the chin. He followed this with a merciless beating the Englishman.

The *gora* couldn't believe it was actually happening. He tried to ward off the descending blows, but without much luck. He could see that his assailant was in a rage bordering on madness. In desperation, he began to shout for help. This seemed to enrage Ustad Mangu even more, and the blows got harder. He was screaming with fury: 'The same old cockiness even on 1 April! Well, son, it is we who are the Raj now.'

A crowd had gathered. Two policemen appeared from somewhere and with great difficulty managed to rescue the hapless Englishman. It was quite a sight. There stood Ustad Mangu with one policeman to his left and one to his right, his broad chest thrown out in defiance. He was foaming at the mouth, but there was strange light in his eyes. To the astonished crowd, Ustad Mangu was saying: 'Those days are gone, friends, when we were just good for nothing. There is a new constitution, a new constitution. Understand?'

The Englishman's face was swollen and he looked extremely foolish. He still couldn't understand what had happened.

Ustad Mangu was taken by the two constables to the local police station. All the time, even when he was inside the station, he kept screaming, 'New constitution, new constitution!'

'What rubbish are you talking? What new constitution? It's the same old constitution, you fool,' he was told.

Then they locked him up.

THE AUTHOR

Saadat Hassan Manto was born on 11th May, 1912 in an East Punjab village, Samrala, now in India. His father, Ghulam Hassan Manto was a sub-judge who belonged to a prosperous Kashmiri family settled in Amritsar and popularly known as "lawyers' family."

Manto is considered to be the greatest Urdu short-story writer. His matchless artistic skill as a short-story writer is rightly well-acknowledged. He is deservedly admired for his stark realism, remarkable insight into human psyche, convincing portraits of human beings made of flesh and blood, vivid observation, and attention to details. He is also renowned for his daring truthfulness, candour, and a unique style characterized by surprisingly original images, subtle irony, and sarcasm.

Manto's literary career began with Urdu translations of masterpieces of the world literature. He read and translated stories, plays, and poems of Russian, French and English masters such as Gogol, Pushkin, Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Rousseau, Voltaire, Hugo, Dumas, Maupassant, Oscar Wilde, Shaw, and Maugham. His translations appeared at first, in prestigious Urdu magazines — *Humayoon*, *Alamgeer*, *Nairang-e-Khayal*, *Aligarh University Magazine*, *Adabi Dunya*, *Saqi*, *Adab-e-Lateef*, *Naya Daur*, etc. Subsequently, these translations were collected and published in book form: *Sarguzashte-Aseer*, (1933) *Do Dramay* (1934) *Roosy Afsanay* (1934) *Gorki-Kay Afsanay* (1946).

Very soon, Manto began to write remarkably original short-stories and plays. His works include:

Short-Stories:- *Atish Paray* (1936) *Manto Kay Afsanay* (1940) *Dhoowan* (1941) *Afsanay Aur Dramay* (1943) *Lazzat-e-Sang* (1947) *Chughed* (1948) *Siyah Hashiyay* (1948) *Thanda Ghosht* (1950) *Namrood Ke Khudaye* (1950) *Yazeed* (1951) *Khali Botlen Khali Dubbay* (1951) *Sarak Kay Kinaray* (1953) *Badshahat Ka Khatma* (1952) *Sarkandon Kay Peechay* (1954) *Shikari Aurtein* (1955) *Bagher-Ijazat* (1955) *Burqay* (1956) *Ratti Masha Tola* (1956) *Anarkali* (1957)

Novel: *Bagher Unwan Kay* (1955)

Plays:- *Auo* (1942) *Manto Kay Dramay* (1943) *Karwat* (1946) *Janazay* (1943) *Teen Aurtein* (1943).

Iconoclastic Biographical Sketches:

Ganjay Farishtay (1952) *Loud Speaker* (1955) *Noor Jehan Saroor Jehan* (1954)

Essays:

Manto Kay Mazameen (1942) *Talkh, Tursh, Shireen* (1952).

Miscellany:- *Uopar, Neechay, Darmiyan* (1954)

A REVIEW

The Govt. of India Act, 1935, was supposed to take the Indians out of the subservience of the British rulers. At least it was expected to be declared through the Act that the Indians were human beings and were to be treated as such. Ustad Mangu whose reputation as a knowledgeable man was well-established amongst the tongawalas, waited for the day of the promulgation of the Act to celebrate his freedom from the British. He thought that his right as a human being as well as a citizen of India would be recognized and accepted.

"Naya Qanoon" was written in 1938 and by then it was fully realized that the New Act of 1935 had brought nothing to change — socially or politically. Ustad Mangu who brought his decorated tonga on the streets of Lahore on "First April" — a date which suited to the befooling of his aspirations — with a new vision of liberation wondered that nothing had changed. His fight with the white man whom he hated, ridiculing his so-called superiority, was a manifestation of his illusion: "Everything will be changed with the new Act", he thought. But it did not. As a punishment he was sent to jail.

The story proved that Manto joined the anti-Imperialist struggle by establishing the fact that the British were hated in the United India because of their unjust racialism, bigotry, and high-handedness.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Versatility</i>	ability to turn easily from one subject or occupation to another
<i>Curiosity</i>	a desire to learn or to know; Inquisitiveness; Anything curious, strange or rare
<i>Caress</i>	to touch or stroke lovingly or gently
<i>Fares</i>	passengers who pay fare for hiring tonga
<i>Reflectively</i>	thoughtfully; meditatively
<i>Ruddy</i>	having a healthy red colour
<i>Razzle-Dazzle</i>	a flashy display intended to confuse; bewilder or deceive
<i>Nausea</i>	a feeling of sickness at the stomach; with an impulse to vomit; disgust
<i>Arrogance</i>	the quality or state of being arrogant; overbearing pride or self-importance
<i>Ambled</i>	to go easily and unhurriedly; walk in a leisurely walking pace
<i>Diatribes</i>	a bitter, abusive criticism or denunciation; a continued discouragement or disputation
<i>Wretch</i>	a miserable or unhappy person; a person in deep distress or misfortune; a person who is despised or scorned
<i>Imperiously</i>	overbearing; arrogantly; domineeringly etc
<i>Impertinent</i>	insolent; impudent; not showing proper respect & manners

<i>Insolence</i>	boldly disrespectful in speech or behaviour; impertinent; impudent; arrogantly contemptuous
<i>Cockiness</i>	the quality of being conceited
<i>Pidgin</i>	a mixed language or jargon, originally developed for the purposes of trade

4

BREAKFAST

John Steinbeck

This thing fills me with pleasure. I don't know why; I can see it in the smallest detail. I find myself recalling it again and again, each time bringing more detail out of a sunken memory; remembering brings the curious warm pleasure.

It was very early in the morning. The eastern mountains were black-blue, but behind them the light stood up faintly colored at the mountain rims with a washed red, growing colder, grayer, and darker as it went up and overhead until, at a place near the west, it merged with pure night.

And it was cold, not painfully so, but cold enough so that I rubbed my hands and shoved them deep into my pockets, and I hunched my shoulders up and scuffled my feet on the ground. Down in the valley where I was, the earth was that lavender gray of dawn. I walked along a country road, and ahead of me I saw a tent that was only a little lighter gray than the ground. Beside the tent there was a flash of orange fire seeping out of the cracks of an old, rusty iron stove. Gray smoke spurted up out of the stubby stovepipe — spurted up a long way before it spread out and dissipated.

I saw a young woman beside the stove, really a girl. She was dressed in a faded cotton skirt and waist. As I came close I saw that she carried a baby in a crooked arm and the baby was nursing its head under her waist out of the cold. The mother moved about, poking the fire, shifting the rusty lids of the stove to make a greater draft, opening the oven door; and all the time

the baby was nursing, but that didn't interfere with the mother's work, nor with the light, quick gracefulness of her movements. There was something very precise and practiced in her movements. The orange fire flicked out of the cracks in the stove and threw dancing reflections on the tent.

I was close now, and I could smell frying bacon and baking bread, the warmest, pleasantest odors I know. From the east the light grew swiftly. I came near to the stove and stretched my hands out to it and shivered all over when the warmth struck me. Then the tent flap jerked up, and a young man came out, and an elder man followed him. They were dressed in new blue dungarees and in new dungaree coats with the brass button shining. They were sharp-faced men, and they looked much alike.

The younger had a dark stubble beard and the older had a gray stubble beard. Their hands and faces were wet; their hair dripped with water; and water stood out on their stiff beards, and their cheeks shone with water. Together they stood looking quietly at the lightening east; they yawned together and looked at the light on the hill rims. They turned and saw me.

"Morning," said the older man. His face was neither friendly nor unfriendly.

"Morning, sir," I said.

"Morning," said the younger man.

The water was slowly drying on their faces. They came to the stove and warmed their hands at it.

The girl kept to her work, her face averted and her eyes on what she was doing. Her hair was tied back out of her eyes with a string, and it hung down her back and swayed as she worked. She set tin cups on a big packing box, set tin plates and knives and forks out, too. Then she scooped fried bacon out of deep grease and laid it on a big tin platter, and the bacon cricked and rustled as it grew crisp. She opened the rusty oven door and took out a square pan full of high big biscuits.

When the smell of that hot bread came out, both of the men inhaled deeply. The young man said softly, "Keerist!"

The elder man turned to me. "Had your breakfast?"

"No".

"Well, sit down with us, then."

That was the signal. We went to the packing case and squatted on the ground about it. The young man asked, "Picking cotton?"

"No."

"We had twelve days work so far," the young man said.

The girl spoke from the stove. "They even got new clothes."

The two men looked down at their new dungarees, and they both smiled a little.

The girl set out the platter of bacon, the brown high biscuits, a bowl of bacon gravy, and a pot of coffee, and then she squatted down by the box too. The baby was still nursing, its head up under her waist out of the cold. I could hear the sucking noises it made.

We filled our plates, poured bacon gravy over our biscuits, and sugared our coffee. The older man filled his mouth full, and he chewed and chewed and swallowed. Then he said, "God Almighty, it's good," and he filled his mouth again.

The young man said, "We been eating good for twelve days."

We all ate quickly, frantically, and refilled our plates, and ate quickly again until we were full and warm. The hot, bitter coffee scalded our throats. We threw the last little bit with the grounds in it on the earth and refilled our cups.

There was color in the light now, a reddish gleam that made the air seem colder. The two men faced the east, and their faces were lighted by the dawn; and I looked up for a moment

and saw the image of the mountain and the light coming over it reflected in the older man's eyes.

Then the two men threw the ground from their cups on the earth, and they stood up together. "Got to get going," the older man said.

The younger man turned to me. "F you want to pick cotton, we could maybe get you on."

"No. I got to go along. Thanks for breakfast."

The older man waved his hand in a negative. "O.K. Glad to have you." They walked away together. The air was blazing with light at the eastern skyline. And I walked away down the country road.

That's all. I know, of course some of the reasons why it was pleasant. But there was some element of great beauty there that makes the rush of warmth when I think of it.

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THE AUTHOR

John Steinbeck was one of the most successful of the regionalists in the 1930's. His biography is almost a check list of the activities thought important for the fiction writer of the period: he has been an apprentice hod-carrier, apprentice painter, chemist, estate caretaker, surveyor, fisherman, fruit-picker, and newspaper reporter. He is furthermore a native of natives in California. Born in Salinas (1902), he attended Stanford University and since 1930 has lived in Monterey. *The Long Valley* (1938), from which this story is taken and *Pastures of Heaven* (1932) are groups of stories unified by locale. *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) are his best known novels.

THE AUTHOR

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A REVIEW

John Ernest Steinbeck is an articulate and a socially-conscious artist. He perfectly understands human feelings and aestheticises them as a consummate artist. "Breakfast" is one such short story in which purity of living is described.

The story is about a poor family willing to work happily for a little better living. The family has no sarcasm, no complaints, no anger against any person or agency on account of poverty. They had twelve days work and "they even got new clothes." The older man "chewed and chewed and swallowed" his breakfast and said "God Almighty it's good." "We been eating good for twelve days," the young man said. That is how indirectly Steinbeck portrays their acute poverty making the reader fully conscious of the human feelings and predicament. He has a dream of the self-sufficiency of the individual man which he very successfully illustrates in this story. The beauty and simplicity of the poor God-fearing people living upon cotton-picking, a seasonal labour, has made his story a pleasant account of favourable conditions for them. The reader gets passionately involved. The last remarks in the story are telling: "That's all. I know, of course, some of the reasons why it was pleasant. But there was some element of great beauty there that makes the rush of warmth when I think of it."

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Faintly colored</i>	dim; indistinct; weak colors
<i>Mountain rims</i>	edge border of mountain
<i>Merge</i>	combine; to be one with
<i>Shoved</i>	pushed roughly
<i>Lavender grasp</i>	fragrant European plant of the mint family
<i>Seeping out</i>	leaking through small openings
<i>Stubby</i>	short and thickest
<i>Spurting up</i>	gushed forth in a stream
<i>Dissipated</i>	dispersed; scattered; vanished; indulged in pleasure
<i>Flicked out</i>	streaked out; dashed out
<i>Dungarees</i>	work overall
<i>Stubble beard</i>	growth of beard as short stumps of grain left standing after the harvest.
<i>Keerist</i>	Christ
<i>Squatted down on</i>	to sit on heel with knee bent
<i>Scalded</i>	burnt with hot liquid or steam

5

TAKE PITY

Bernard Malamud

Davidov, the census-taker, opened the door without knocking, limped into the room and sat wearily down. Outcame his notebook and he was on the job. Rosen, the ex-coffee salesman, wasted, eyes despairing, sat motionless, crosslegged, on his cot. The square, clean but cold room, lit by a dim globe, was sparsely furnished: the cot, a folding chair, small table, old unpainted chests — no closets but who needed them? — and a small sink with a rough piece of green, institutional soap on its holder — you could smell it across the room. The worn black shade over the single narrow window was drawn to the ledge, surprising Davidov.

"What's the matter you don't pull the shade up?" he remarked.

Rosen ultimately sighed. "Let it stay."

"Why? outside is light."

"Who needs light?"

"What then you need?"

"Light I don't need," replied Rosen.

Davidov, sour-faced, flipped through the closely scrawled pages of his notebook until he found a clean one. He attempted to scratch in a word with his fountain pen but it had run dry, so he fished a pencil stub out of his vest pocket and sharpened it with a cracked razor blade. Rosen paid no attention to the feathery

shavings falling to the floor. He looked restless, seemed to be listening to or for something, although Davidov was convinced there was absolutely nothing to listen to. It was only when the census-taker somewhat irritably and with increasing loudness repeated a question, that Rosen stirred and identified himself. He was about to furnish an address but caught himself and shrugged.

Davidov did not comment on the salesman's gesture. "So begin," he nodded.

"Who knows where to begin?" Rosen stared at the drawn shade. "Do they know here where to begin?"

"Philosophy we are not interested," said Davidov. "Start in how you met her."

"Who?" pretended Rosen.

"Her," he snapped.

"So if I got to begin, how you know about already?" Rosen asked triumphantly.

David spoke wearily, "You mentioned before."

Rosen remembered. They had questioned him upon his arrival and he now recalled blurting out her name. It was perhaps something in the air. It did not permit you to retain what you remembered. That was part of the cure, if you wanted a cure.

"Where I met her — ?" Rosen murmured. "I met her where she always was — in the back room there in that hole in the wall that it was a waste of time for me I went there. Maybe I sold them half a bag of coffee a month. This is not business."

"In business we are not interested."

"What then you are interested?" Rosen mimicked Davidov's tone.

Davidov clammed up coldly.

Rosen knew they had him where it hurt, so he went on: "The husband was maybe forty, Axel Kalish, a Polish refugee. He worked like a blind horse when he got to America, and saved maybe two — three thousand dollars that he bought with the money this pisher grocery in a dead neighborhood where he didn't have a chance. He called my company up for credit and they sent me I should see. I recommended okay because I felt sorry. He had a wife, Eva, you know already about her, and two darling girls, one five and one three, little dolls, Fega and Surale that I didn't want them to suffer. So right away I told him, without tricks, 'Kiddo, this is a mistake. This place is a grave. Here they will bury you if you don't get out quick!'"

Rosen sighed deeply.

"So?" Davidov had thus far written nothing, irking the ex-salesman.

"So? — Nothing. He didn't get out. After a couple of months he tried to sell but nobody bought, so he stayed and starved. They never made expenses. Everyday they got poorer you couldn't look in their faces. 'Don't be a damn fool,' I told him, 'go in bankruptcy.' But he couldn't stand it to lose all his capital, and he was also afraid it would be hard to find a job. 'My God,' I said, 'do anything. Be a painter, a janitor, a junk man, but get out of here before everybody is a skeleton.'"

"This he finally agreed with me, but before he could go in auction he dropped dead."

Davidov made a note. "How did he die?"

"Oh this I am not an expert," Rosen replied. "You know better than me."

"How did he die?" Davidov spoke impatiently. "Say in one word."

"From what he died? — he died, that's all."

"Answer, please, this question."

"Broke in him something. That's how."

"Broke what?"

"Broke what breaks. He was talking to me how bitter was his life, and he touched me on my sleeve to say something else, but the next minute his face got small and he fell down dead, the wife screaming, the little girls crying that it made in my heart pain. I am myself a sick man and when I saw him laying on the floor, I said to myself, 'Rosen, say good-bye, this guy is finished. So I said it.'"

Rosen got up from the cot and strayed despondently around the room, avoiding the window. Davidov was occupying the only chair, so the ex-salesman was finally forced to sit on the edge of the bed again. This irritated him. He badly wanted a cigarette, but disliked asking for one.

Davidov permitted him a short interval of silence, then leafed impatiently through his notebook. Rosen, to needle the census-taker, said nothing.

"So what happened?" Davidov finally demanded.

Rosen spoke with ashes in his mouth. "After the funeral —" he paused, tried to wet his lips, then went on, "He belonged to a society that they buried him, and he also left a thousand dollars insurance, but after the funeral I said to her, 'Eva, listen to me. Take the money and your children and run away from here. Let the creditors take the store. What will they get?—Nothing.'"

"'But she answered me. 'Where will I go, where, with my two orphans that their father left them to starve?'"

"'Go anywhere,' I said, 'Go to your relatives.'"

"She laughed like laughs somebody who hasn't got no joy."

"My relatives Hitler took away from me."

"What about Axel — surely an uncle somewhere?"

"Nobody," she said. "I will stay here like my Axel wanted. With the insurance I will buy new stock and fix up the store. Every week I will buy new stock and fix up the store. Every week

I will decorate the window, and in this way gradually will come in new customers—'

" 'Eva, my darling girl—'

" 'A millionaire I don't expect to be. All I want is I should make a little living and take care on my girls. We will live in the back here like before, and in this way I can work and watch them, too.'

" 'Eva,' I said, 'you are a nice-looking young woman, only thirty-eight years. Don't throw away your life here. Don't flush in the toilet — you should excuse me — the thousand poor dollars from your dead husband. Believe me I know from such stores. After thirty-five years' experience I know a graveyard when I smell it. Go better some place and find a job. You're young yet. Sometime you will met somebody and get married.'

" 'No, Rosen, not me,' she said. 'With marriage I am finished. Nobody wants a poor widow with two children.'

" 'This I don't believe it.'

" 'I know,' she said.

" 'Never in my life I saw so bitter a woman's face.'

" 'No,' I said. 'No.'

" 'Yes', Rosen, yes. In my whole life I never had anything. In my whole life I always suffered. I don't expect better. This is my life.'

'I said no and she said yes. What could I do? I am a man with only one kidney, and worse than that, that I won't mention it. When I talked she didn't listen, so I stopped to talk. Who can argue with a widow?'

The ex-salesman glanced up at Davidov but the census taker did not reply. "What happened then?" he asked.

"What happened?" mocked Rosen. "Happened what happens."

Davidov's face grew red.

"What happened, happened". Rosen said hastily. "She ordered from the wholesalers all kinds good that she paid for them cash. All week she opened boxes and packed on the shelves cans, jars, packages. Also she cleaned, and she washed, and she mopped with oil the floor. With tissue paper she made new decorations in the window, everything should look nice — but who came in? Nobody except a few poor customers from the tenement around the corner. And when they came? When was closed the supermarkets and they needed some little item what they forgot to buy, like a quart milk, fifteen cents' cheese, a small can sardines for lunch. In a few months was again dusty the cans on the shelves, and her thousand was gone. Credit she couldn't get except from me, and from me she got because I paid out of my pocket the company. This she didn't know. She worked, she dressed clean, she waited that the store should get better. Little by little the shelves got empty, but where was the profit? They ate it up. When I looked on the little girls I knew what she didn't tell me. Their faces were white, they were thin, they were hungry. She kept the little food that was left, on the shelves. One night I brought in a nice piece sirloin, but I could see from her eyes that she didn't like that I did it. So what else could I do? I have a heart and I am human."

Here the ex-salesman wept.

Davidov pretended not to see though once he peeked.

Rosen blew his nose, then went on more calmly, "When the children were sleeping we sat in the dark there, in the back, and not once in four hours opened the door should come in a customer. 'Eva, for Godsakes, run away,' I said.

"I have no place to go," she said.

"I will give you where you can go, and please don't say to me no. I am a bachelor, this you know. I got whatever I need and more besides. Let me help you and the children. Money don't interest me. Interest me good health, but I can't buy it. I'll tell you what I will do. Let this place go to the creditors and move into a two-family house that I own, which the top floor is now empty.

Rent will cost you nothing. In the meantime you can go and find a job. I will also pay the downstairs lady to take care of the girls — God bless them — until you will come home. With your wages you will buy the food, if you need clothes, and also save a little. This you can use when you get married some day. What do you say?"

"She didn't answer me. She only looked on me in such a way, with such burning eyes, like I was small and ugly. For the first time I thought to myself, 'Rosen, this woman don't like you.'

" 'Thank you very kindly, my friend Mr. Rosen,' she answered me, 'but charity we are not needing. I got yet a paying business, and it will get better when times are better. Now is bad times. When comes again good times will get better the business.'

" 'Who charity?' I cried to her. 'What charity? Speaks to you your husband's friend.'

" 'Mr. Rosen, my husband didn't have no friends.'

" 'Can't you see that I want to help the children?'

" 'The children have their mother.'

" 'Eve, what's the matter with you?' I said, 'Why do you make sound bad something that I mean it should be good?'

" 'This she didn't answer. I felt sick in my stomach, and was coming also a headache so I left.

" 'All night I didn't sleep, and then all of a sudden I figured out a reason why she was worried. She was worried I would ask for me some kind payment except cash. She got the wrong man. Anyway, this made me think of something that I didn't think about before. I thought now to ask her to marry me. What did she have to lose? I could take care of myself without any trouble to them. Fega and Surale would have a father he could give them for the movies, or sometime to buy a little doll to play with, and when I died, would go to them my investments and insurance policies.

" 'The next day I spoke to her.

" 'For myself, Eva, I don't want a thing. Absolutely not a thing. For you and your girls — everything. I am not a strong man, Eva. In fact, I am sick. I tell you this you should understand I don't expect to live long. But even for a few years would be nice to have a little family.'

"She was with her back to me and didn't speak.

"When she turned around again her face was white, but the mouth was like iron.

"No, Mr. Rosen.'

" 'Why not, tell me?'

" 'I had enough with sick men.' She began to cry. 'Please, Mr. Rosen. Go home.'

"I didn't have strength I should argue with her, so I went home. I went home but hurt me my mind. All day long and all night I felt bad. My back pained me where was missing my kidney. Also too much smoking. I tried to understand this woman but I couldn't. Why should somebody that her two children were starving always say no to a man that he wanted to help her? What did I do to her bad? Am I maybe a murderer she should hate me so much? All that I felt in my heart was pity for her and the children, but I couldn't convince her. Then I went back and begged her she should let me help them, and once more she told me no.

"Eva,' I said, 'I don't blame you that you don't want a sick man. So come with me to a marriage broker and we will find you a strong, healthy husband that he will support you and your girls. I will give the dowry.'

"She screamed, 'On this I don't need your help, Rosen!'

"I didn't say no more. What more could I say? All day long, from early in the morning till late in the night she worked like an animal. All day she mopped, she washed with soap and a brush the shelves, the few cans she polished, but the store was still rotten. The little girls I was afraid to look at. I could see in their faces their bones. They were tired, they were weak. Little

Surale held with her hand all the time the dress of Fega. Once when I saw them in the street, I gave them some cakes, but when I tried the next day to give them something else, the mother shouldn't know. Fega answered me, 'We can't take, Momma says today is a fast day.'

"I went inside. I made my voice soft. 'Eva, on my bended knee I am a man with nothing in this world. Allow me that I should have a little pleasure before I die. Allow me that I should help you to stock up once more the store.'

"So what did she do? She cried, it was terrible to see. And after she cried, what did he say? She told me to go away and I shouldn't come back. I felt like to pick up a chair and break her head.

"In my house I was too weak to eat. For two days I took in my mouth nothing except maybe a spoon of chicken noodle soup, or maybe a glass tea without sugar. This wasn't good for me. My health felt bad.

"Then I made up a scheme that I was a friend of Axel's who lived in Jersey. I said I owed Axel seven hundred dollars that he lent me this money fifteen years ago, before he got married. I said I did not have the whole money now, but I would send her every week twenty dollars till it was paid up the debt. I put inside the letter two tens and gave it to a friend of mine, also a salesman, he should mail it in Newark so she would not be suspicious who wrote the letters."

To Rosen's surprise Davidov had stopped writing. The book was full, so he tossed it into the table; yawned, but listened amiably. His curiosity had died.

Rosen got up and fingered the notebook. He tried to read the small distorted handwriting but could not make out a single word.

"It's not English and it's not Yiddish," he said. "Could it be in Hebrew?"

"No," answered Davidov, "It's an old-fashioned language that they don't use it nowadays."

"Oh?" Rosen returned to the cot. He saw no purpose to going on now that it was not required, but he felt he had to.

"Came back all the letters," he said dully. "The first she opened it, then pasted back again the envelope, but the rest she didn't even open."

"'Here,' I said to myself, 'is a very strange thing — a person that you can never give her anything — But I will give.'"

"I went then to my lawyer and we made out a will that everything I had — all my investments, my two houses that I owned, also furniture, my car, the checking account — every cent would go to her, and when she died, the rest would be left for the two girls. The same with my insurance. They would be my beneficiaries. Then I signed and went home. In the kitchen I turned on the gas and put my head in the stove.

"Let her say now no."

Davidov, scratching his stubbled cheek, nodded. This was the part he already knew. He got up and before Rosen could cry no, idly raised the window shade.

It is twilight in space but a woman stood before the window.

Rosen with a bound was off his cot to see.

It was Eva, staring at him with haunted, beseeching eyes.

She raised her arms to him.

Infuriated, the ex-salesman shook his fist.

"Whore, bastard, bitch," he shouted at her. "Go away from here. Go home to your children."

Davidov made no move to hinder him as Rosen rammed down the window shade.

THE AUTHOR

Bernard Malamud (1914 —), a native of Brooklyn, was graduated from City College and received an M.A. from Columbia in 1942. Like many other distinguished American literary men, Malamud has combined university teaching and writing in his professional career. His work has received many awards, including the Ford Fellowship, the Rosenthal Award, the 1959 National Book Award for the *Magic Barrel* (the first of two collections of his short stories), and the 1967 National Book Award for *The Fixer*. His novels include *The Natural*, *The Assistant*, *The Fixer*, and the most recently, the highly acclaimed *The Tenants*.

A REVIEW

Bernard Malamud is alive to the modern sensibility and writes about the social, cultural and economic problems of the 20th century. The depression of the 30s is a milestone in American history and much literature has been produced in that background. The depression made people eat the crunches of the bread from the garbage and kill each other for a paltry amount of money.

In "Take Pity" we read an undaunted struggle of woman who after the death of her husband refuses every offer made to her in the form of charity. In spite of every effort he makes to help her, Rosen's attitude toward Eva is debased. Even his proposal is not based on love, which should be the sole reason for marrying. Eva stands for the cause of women per se and for all the human beings who want to live with values or else they want to dwindle down to death slowly and gradually.

Rosen does not like light. He prefers the shade drawn to the ledge, which shows his dark mind from which any friend can jump up any time to spoil the whole act of nicety which he is so desperate to offer to Eva. Rosen symbolizes a man's exploitative sympathy thinking a woman desperately needs it. Eva is determined not to be exploited, throwing back on him whatever Rosen offers her.

At the end, the conflict is shown between Eva and Rosen. And even in "twilight in space" she stands defiantly before the window to raise her arm to Rosen who in turn shakes his fist toward her and swears badly.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Wearily</i>	being tired; being without any further patience
<i>Chest</i>	a box with a lid and sometimes a lock
<i>Sour-faced</i>	with an unpleasant face
<i>Institutional soap</i>	intended to gain prestige rather than to increase sales
<i>Flipped</i>	moved with a quick jerk
<i>Scrawled pages</i>	pages that are written carelessly
<i>Shrugged</i>	to draw up the shoulders as in expressing indifference or doubt
<i>Blurting out her name</i>	saying her name impulsively
<i>Pisher</i>	disgusting
<i>Yiddish</i>	a language spoken by many European Jews and their descendants on their continents
<i>Distorted handwriting</i>	twisted; cramped handwriting

6

THE HAPPY PRINCE

Oscar Wilde

High above the city, on a tall column, stood the statue of the Happy Prince. He was gilded all over with thin leaves of fine gold, for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt.

He was very much admired indeed. 'He is a beautiful as weathercock,' remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes; 'only not quite so useful,' he added, fearing lest people should think him unpractical, which he really was not.

'Why can't you be like the Happy Prince?' asked a sensible mother of her little boy who was crying for the moon. 'The Happy Prince never dreams of crying for anything.'

'I am glad there is someone in the world who is quite happy,' muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue.

'He looks just like an angel,' said the Charity Children as they came out of the cathedral in their bright scarlet cloaks, and their clean white pinafores.

'How do you know?' said the Mathematical Master, 'you have never seen one.'

'Ah! but we have, in our dreams,' answered the children; and the Mathematical Master frowned and looked very severe, for he did not approve of children dreaming.

One night there flew over the city a little Swallow. His friends had gone away to Egypt six weeks before, but he had stayed behind, for he was in love with the most beautiful Reed. He had met her early in the spring as he was flying down the river after a big yellow moth, and had been so attracted by her slender waist that he had stopped to talk to her.

'Shall I love you?' said the Swallow, who liked to come to the point at once, and the Reed made him a low bow. So he flew round and round her, touching the water with his wings, and making silver ripples. This was his courtship, and it lasted all through the summer.

'It is a ridiculous attachment,' twittered the other Swallows, 'she has no money, and far too many relations,' and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds. Then, when the autumn came, they all flew away.

After they had gone he felt lonely, and began to tire of his lady-love. 'She has no conversation,' he said. 'and I am afraid, that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind.' And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtsies. 'I admit that she is domestic,' he continued, 'but I love travelling, and my wife, consequently should love travelling also.'

'Will you come away with me?' he said finally to her; but the Reed shook her head, she was so attached to her home.

'You have been trifling with me,' he cried, 'I am off to the Pyramids. Good-bye!' and he flew away.

All day long he flew, and at night-time he arrived at the city. 'Where shall I put up?' he said; 'I hope the town has made preparations.'

Then he saw the statue on the tall column. 'I will put up there,' he cried; 'it is a fine position with plenty of fresh air.' So he alighted just between the feet of the Happy Prince.

'I have a golden bedroom,' he said softly to himself as he looked round, and he prepared to go to sleep; but just as he was

putting his head under his wing a large drop of water fell on him. 'What a curious thing!' he cried, 'there is not a single cloud in the sky, the stars are quite clear and bright, and yet it is raining. The climate in the north of Europe is really dreadful. The Reed used to like the rain, but that was merely her selfishness.'

Then another drop fell.

'What is the use of a statue if it cannot keep the rain off?' he said; 'I must look for a good chimney-pot,' and he determined to fly away.

But before he had opened his wings, a third drop fell, and he looked up, and saw — Ah! what did he see?

The eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears, and tears were running down his golden cheeks. His face was so beautiful in the moonlight that the little Swallow was filled with pity.

'Who are you?' he said.

'I am the Happy Prince.'

'Why are you weeping then?' asked the Swallow; 'you have quite drenched me.'

'When I was alive and had a human heart,' answered the statue, 'I did not know what tears were, for I lived in the Palace of Sans-Souci, where sorrow is not allowed to enter. In the daytime I played with my companions in the garden, and in the evening I led the dance in the Great Hall. Round the garden ran a very lofty wall, but I never cared to ask what lay beyond it, everything about me was so beautiful. My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness. So I lived, and so I died. And now that I am dead they have set me up here so high that I can see all the ugliness and all the misery of my city, and though my heart is made of lead yet I cannot choose but weep.'

'What, is he not solid gold?' said the Swallow to himself. He was too polite to make any personal remarks out loud.

'Far away,' continued the statue in a low musical voice, 'far away in a little street there is a poor house. One of the windows is open, and through it I can see a woman seated at a table. Her face is thin and worn, and she has coarse, red hands, all pricked by the needle, for she is a seamstress. She is embroidering passion-flowers on a satin gown for the loveliest of the Queen's maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball. In a bed in the corner of the room her little boy is lying ill. He has a fever, and is asking for oranges. His mother has nothing to give him but river water, so he is crying. Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow, will you not bring her the ruby out of my sword-hilt? My feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move. 'I am waited for in Egypt,' said the Swallow. 'My friends are flying up and down the Nile, and talking to the large lotusflowers. Soon they will go to sleep in the tomb of the great King. The King is there himself in his painted coffin. He is wrapped in yellow linen, and embalmed with spices. Round his neck is a chain of pale green jade, and his hands are like withered leaves.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'will you not stay with me for one night, and be my messenger? The boy is so thirsty, and the mother so sad.'

'I don't think I like boys,' answered the Swallow. 'Last summer, when I was staying on the river, there were two rude boys, the miller's sons, who were always throwing stones at me. They never hit me, of course; we swallow fly far too well for that, and besides, I come of a family famous for its agility; but still, it was a mark of disrespect.'

But the Happy Prince looked so sad that the little Swallow was sorry. 'It is very cold here,' he said; but I will stay with you for one night, and be your messenger.'

'Thank you, little Swallow,' said the Prince.

So the Swallow picked out the great ruby from the Prince's sword, and flew away with it in his beak over the roofs of the town.

He passed by the cathedral tower, where the white marble angels were sculptured. He passed by the palace and heard the sound of dancing. A beautiful girl came out on the balcony with her lover. 'How wonderful the stars are,' he said to her, and how wonderful is the power of love! 'I hope my dress will be ready in time for the State-ball,' she answered; 'I have ordered passion-flowers to be embroidered on it; but the seamstresses are so lazy.'

He passed over the river, and saw the lanterns hanging to the masts of the ships. He passed over the Ghetto and saw the old Jews bargaining with each other, and weighing out money in copper scales. At last he came to the poor house and looked in. The boy was tossing feverishly on his bed, and the mother had fallen asleep, she was so tired. In he hopped, and laid the great ruby on the table beside the woman's thimble. Then he flew gently round the bed, fanning the boy's forehead with his wings. 'How cool I feel,' said the boy, 'I must be getting better,' and he sank into a delicious slumber.

Then the Swallow flew back to the Happy Prince, and told him what he had done. 'It is curious,' he remarked, 'but I feel quite warm now, although it is so cold.'

'That is because you have done a good action,' said the Prince. And the little Swallow began to think, and then he fell asleep. Thinking always made him sleepy.

When day broke he flew down to the river and had a bath. 'What a remarkable phenomenon,' said the Professor of Ornithology as he was passing over the bridge. 'A Swallow in winter!' And he wrote a long letter about it to the local newspaper. Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand.

'To-night I go to Egypt,' said the Swallow, and he was in high spirits at the prospect. He visited all the public monuments, and sat a long time on top of the church steeple. Wherever he went the Sparrows chirruped, and said to each other, 'What a distinguished stranger!' so he enjoyed himself very much.

When the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince. 'Have you any commissions for Egypt?' he cried; 'I am just starting.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'will you not stay with me one night longer?'

'I am waited for in Egypt,' answered the Swallow. 'Tomorrow my friends will fly up to the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon. All night long he watches the stars, and when the morning star shines he utters one cry of joy, and then he is silent. At noon the yellow lions come down to the water's edge to drink. They have eyes like green beryls, and their roar is louder than the roar of the cataract.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'far away across the city I see a young man in a garret. He is leaning over a desk covered with papers, and in a tumbler by his side there is a bunch of withered violets. His hair is brown and crisp, and his lips are red as a pomegranate, and he has large and dreamy eyes. He is trying to finish a play for the Director of the Theatre, but he is too cold to write any more. There is no fire in the grate, and hunger has made him faint.'

'I will wait with you one night longer,' said the Swallow, who really had a good heart. 'Shall I take him another ruby?'

'Alas! I have no ruby now,' said the Prince; 'my eyes are all that I have left. They are made of rare sapphires, which were brought out of India a thousand years ago. Pluck out one of them and take it to him. He will sell it to the jeweller, and buy food and firewood, and finish his play.'

'Dear Prince,' said the Swallow, 'I cannot do that;' and he began to weep.

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'do as I command you.'

So the Swallow pluck out the Prince's eye, and flew away to the student's garret. It was easy enough to get in, as there was

a hole in the roof. Through this he darted, and came into the room. The young man had his head buried in his hands, so he did not hear the flutter of the bird's wings, and when he looked up he found the beautiful sapphire lying on the withered violets.

'I am beginning to be appreciated,' he cried; 'this is from some great admirer. Now I can finish my play,' and he looked quite happy.

The next day the Swallow flew down to the harbour. He sat on the mast of a large vessel and watched the sailors hauling big chests out of the hold with ropes. 'Heave a-hoy!' they shouted as each chest came up. 'I am going to Egypt!' cried the Swallow, but nobody minded, and when the moon rose he flew back to the Happy Prince.

'I have come to bid you good-bye,' he cried.

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'will you not stay with me one night longer?'

'It is winter,' answered the Swallow, 'and the chill snow will soon be here. In Egypt the sun is warm on the green palm trees, and the crocodiles lie in the mud and look lazily about them. My companions are building a nest in the Temple of Baalbec, and the pink and white doves are watching them, and cooing to each other. Dear Prince, I must leave you, but I will never forget you, and next spring I will bring you back two beautiful jewels in place of those you have given away. The ruby shall be redder than a red rose, and the sapphire shall be as blue as the great sea.'

'In the square below,' said the Happy Prince, 'there stands a little match-girl. She has let her matches fall in the gutter, and they are all spoiled. Her father will beat her if she does not bring home some money, and she is crying. She has no shoes or stockings, and her little head is bare. Pluck out my other eye, and give it to her, and her father will not beat her.'

'I will stay with you one night longer,' said the Swallow, 'but I cannot pluck out your eye. You would be quite blind then.'

'Swallow, Swallow, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'do as I command you.'

So he plucked out the Prince's other eye, and darted down with it. He swooped past the match-girl and slipped the jewel into the palm of her hand. 'What a lovely bit of glass,' cried the little girl; and she ran home, laughing.

Then the Swallow came back to the Prince. 'You are blind now,' he said, 'so I will stay with you always.'

'No, little Swallow,' said the poor Prince, 'you must go away to Egypt.'

'I will stay with you always,' said the Swallow, and he slept at the Prince's feet.

All the next day he sat on the Prince's shoulder, and told him stories of what he had seen in strange lands. He told him of the red ibises, who stand in long rows on the banks of the Nile, and catch goldfish in their beaks; of the Sphinx, who is as old as the world itself, and lives in the desert, and knows everything; of the merchants, who walk slowly by the side of their camels, and carry amber beads in their hands; of the King of the Mountains of the Moon, who is as black as ebony, and worships a large crystal; of the great green snake that sleeps in a palm-tree, and has twenty priests to feed it with honey-cakes; and of the pygmies who sail over a big lake on large flat leaves, and are always at war with the butterflies.

'Dear little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'you tell me of marvellous things, but more marvellous than anything is the suffering of men and of women. There is no Mystery so great as Misery. Fly over my city, little Swallow, and tell me what you see there.'

So the Swallow flew over the great city, and saw the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates. He flew into dark lanes, and saw the white faces of starving children looking out listlessly at the black streets. Under the archway of a bridge two little boys were lying in one another's arms to try and keep themselves warm. 'How

hungry we are!' they said. 'You must not lie here,' shouted the Watchman, and they wandered out into the rain.

Then he flew back and told the Prince what he had seen.

'I am covered with fine gold,' said the Prince, 'you must take it off, leaf by leaf, and give it to my poor; the living always think that gold can make them happy.'

Leaf after leaf of the fine gold the Swallow picked off, till the Happy Prince looked quite dull and grey. Leaf after leaf of the fine gold he brought to the poor, and the children's faces grew rosier, and they laughed and played games in the street. 'We have bread now!' they cried.

Then the snow came, and after the snow came the frost. The streets looked as if they were made of silver, they were so bright and glistening; long icicles like crystal daggers hung down from the eaves of the houses, everybody went about in furs, and the little boys wore scarlet caps and skated on the ice.

The poor little Swallow grew colder and colder, but he would not leave the Prince, he loved him too well. He picked up crumbs outside the baker's door when the baker was not looking, and tried to keep himself warm by flapping his wings.

But at last he knew that he was going to die. He had just strength to fly up to the Prince's shoulder once more. 'Good-bye, dear Prince!' he murmured, 'will you let me kiss your hand?'

'I am glad that you are going to Egypt at last, little Swallow,' said the Prince, 'you have stayed too long here; but you must kiss me on the lips, for I love you.'

'It is not to Egypt that I am going,' said the Swallow. 'I am going to the House of Death. Death is the brother of Sleep, is he not?'

And he kissed the Happy Prince on the lips, and fell down dead at his feet.

At that moment a curious crack sounded inside the statue, as if something had broken. The fact is that the leaden heart had snapped right in two. It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost.

Early the next morning the Mayor was walking in the square below in company with the Town Councillors. As they passed the column, he looked up at the Statue: 'Dear me! how shabby the Happy Prince looks!' he said.

'How shabby indeed!' cried the Town Councillors, who always agreed with the Mayor, and they went up to look at it.

'The ruby has fallen out of his sword, his eyes are gone, and he is golden no longer,' said the Mayor; 'in fact, he is little better than a beggar!'

'Little better than a beggar,' said the Town Councillors.

'And here is actually a dead bird at his feet!' continued the Mayor. 'We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here. And the Town Clerk made a note of the suggestion.

So they pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. 'As he is no longer beautiful, he is no longer useful,' said the Art Professor at the University.

Then they melted the statue in a furnace, and the Mayor held a meeting of the Corporation to decide what was to be done with the metal. 'We must have another statue, of course,' he said, 'and it shall be a statue of myself.'

'Of myself,' said each of the Town Councillors, and they quarrelled. When I last heard of them they were quarrelling still.

'What a strange thing!' said the overseer of the workmen at the foundry. 'This broken lead heart will not melt in the furnace. We must throw it away.' So they threw it on a dust heap where the dead Swallow was also lying.

'Bring me the two most precious things in the city,' said God to one of His Angels; and the Angel brought Him the leaden heart and the dead bird.

'You have rightly chosen,' said God, 'for in my garden of Paradise this little bird shall sing for evermore, and in my city of gold the Happy Prince shall praise me.'

THE AUTHOR

OSCAR WILDE (1854-1900). The son of Sir William Wilde, a doctor with a distinguished reputation. Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin. He was educated at Portora Royal School, where he was soon recognized as a fine classical scholar, and at Trinity College, Dublin, where he was elected a Queen's Scholar and won the Berkely Gold Medal for Greek in 1874. In the same year he won a scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford, and went to England. At Magdalen he took a first in Mods and Greats and won the Newdigate Prize with his poem 'Ravenna' in 1878.

After his visit to America Wilde spent some months in Paris where he met Hugo, Verlaine, Mallarme, Zola, Daudet, and Balzac. He revisited New York briefly for the belated production of *Vera*, or *The Nihilists* (1883). The preceding year had seen the publication of "*The Happy Prince*" and *Other Tales* (1888), probably written originally for Wilde's two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan, and his success in this form was repeated in *The House of Pomegranates* (1891). Meanwhile he was busy on a novel that was running as a serial in *Lippincott's Magazine*. This was published in 1891 in an ornate volume designed by Charles Ricketts. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was a major success. In the same year Wilde published a book of critical essays, "*Intentions*", and "*Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*" and *Other Stories*. Also in 1891 Wilde was introduced to Lord Alfred Douglas by the poet Lionel Johnson. Asked for a play by the actor-manager George Alexander for St. James's Theatre, Wilde had given him *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Wilde's next play, *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), was produced by Herbert Beerbohm Tree at the Haymarket and was another success. The year 1895 opened with another triumph, the production of *An Ideal Husband* at the Haymarket. A month later Wilde surpassed even that with *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the St. James's. This is his finest work and one of the great comedies of the English language.

A REVIEW

"*The Happy Prince*" has fairy-tale mode of expression. It creates a world which is "ideal and nonimitative" as Oscar Wilde himself says and is known for. But this ideal fairy-tale world is not separated from the surrounding realities of the Victorian age. It, rather brings in all the problems of the Victorian life, such as poverty, hypocrisy, and exploitation: It also comments on the shattering privileges and art for the sake of its purity. These stories were written as he himself says, "to mirror modern life in a form remote from reality."

Modern critics have expressed their opinion on the dark psychological motives of these stories. However, "*The Happy Prince*" and the other stories of its tribe have been appreciated also for their "reading to nice people and even to not so much nice people to make them nice." "*The Happy Prince*" is particularly a neat and clean story which spells out its themes: the statue becomes outwardly uglier as the Prince achieves spiritual beauty. The swallow also achieves perfect beauty by sacrificing his life for the love of the Prince. In each case love and sacrifice are the saving forces.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Gilded</i>	coated with gold
<i>Sapphires</i>	a hard; transparent precious stone of a clear deep blue colour
<i>Scarlet</i>	red
<i>Pinafores</i>	a sleeveless house dress worn by women; apronlike garment worn by little girls
<i>Reed</i>	a bird
<i>Ripples</i>	little waves on the surface of water or grass etc.
<i>Coquette</i>	flirt
<i>Twittered</i>	chirped continuously
<i>Pyramids</i>	huge structures made by ancient Egyptians
<i>Seamstress</i>	a woman who is expert in sewing
<i>Embalmed</i>	made fragrant; perfumed
<i>Agility</i>	being quick and easy in movement; being deft and active
<i>Delicious Slumber</i>	delightful and peaceful sleep
<i>Phenomenon</i>	any fact; circumstance; or experience that is apparent to the sense; and that can be scientifically described
<i>Ornithology</i>	the branch of zoology dealing with birds
<i>Bulrushes</i>	a plant with flowers
<i>Granite</i>	a very hard rock
<i>Ibises</i>	birds with long legs found generally in tropical regions; as the sacred ibises of Nile

<i>Sphinx</i>	any ancient Egyptian statue or figure having the body of a lion and the head of a man
<i>Pygmies</i>	people of small statures
<i>Glistening</i>	shining

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ARABY

James Joyce

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers Schools set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbott*, *By Walter Scott*, *The Devout Communicant* and *The Memoirs of Vidosq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came, dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of everchanging violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the

houses where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out of the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you* about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange

prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: "*O love! O love!*" many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar, she said she would love to go.

"And why can't you?" I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

"It's well for you," she said.

"If I go," I said, "I will bring you something."

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word *Araby* were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised and hoped it was not some Freemason affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hall stand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

"Yes, boy, I know."

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I left the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for sometime and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high cold empty gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs. Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs. Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late, as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

"I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord."

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the halldoor. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hall stand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

"The people are in bed and after their first sleep now," he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

"Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is."

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." He asked me where I was going and, when I had told him a second time, he asked me did I know *The Arab's Farewell to his Steed*. When I felt the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them

back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girdled at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognised a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words *Café Chantant* were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

"O, I never said such a thing!"

"O, but you did!"

"O, but I didn't!"

"Didn't she say that?"

"Yes I heard her."

"O, there's a fib!"

Observing me the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and

"No thank you,"

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

THE AUTHOR

James Joyce: Irish novelist and poet, born at Rathgar, Dublin, 1882, died in Zurich 1941. Educated by the Jesuits at Sallins, Co. Kildare, and at Dublin, where he read modern languages, took a great interest in music, and wrote several essays before graduating in 1902. He left Ireland in 1904 and spent the rest of his life in voluntary exile, mostly in Trieste, Paris and Zurich, despite poverty, difficulties, with publishers and failing sight, writing poetry and prose and a play, *The Exiles* (1918). His famous *Ulysses* appeared in 1922, and *Finnegans Wake* in 1939. He is deservedly recognised as one of the masters of the modern movement, although his actual influence on late fiction has been over-estimated.

A REVIEW

James Joyce's "Araby" describes a conflict between the object world and the feelings of the protagonist. And it ends up with a passionate resolution of the defeat of the central character at the hands of the world: "Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger." This is the anguish and anger of the disillusionment.

The protagonist's main role in the story is to run after the shadows. The story combines in itself a world of reality and irreality. The state of being true to life is juxtaposed with the imaginary, the unreal; and it is realized that the ultimate truth emerges only through this process. Conclusively, it is the legitimate power of the feeling which creates a reality significant enough to give meaning to the irreality. It depicts a psychological rightness which is convincing to the protagonist as well as to the reader.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Imperturbable face</i>	face that cannot be perturbed or excited; impassive face
<i>Musty</i>	stale; dull; trite
<i>Sombre</i>	dark and gloomy; dull; sad; dismal
<i>Gauntlet</i>	a long glove with a flaring cuff; challenge; a form of punishment
<i>Sash</i>	a frame for holding the glass pane of a window or a door; especially a sliding frame
<i>Image</i>	a copy; likeness; a mental picture of something
<i>Jostled</i>	rushed or shoved elbowed roughly as in a crowd
<i>Litanies</i>	a form of prayer in which the clergy and the congregation take part alternately with recitation and response
<i>Chalice</i>	a cup for the wine in sacrament of the Lord's
<i>Impinge upon</i>	encroach upon; to make inroads
<i>Incessant</i>	never ceasing; continuing
<i>Retreat in</i>	a period of seclusion for religious
<i>Convent</i>	contemplation
<i>Annihilate</i>	to bring to nothing; to destroy entirely
<i>Chafed Against</i>	rubbed; annoyed
<i>My soul</i>	my soul grew with vigour and in
<i>Luxuriated</i>	abundance
<i>Enchantment</i>	something that charms and delights greatly
<i>Monotonous</i>	having little or no variety

<i>Fib</i>	a lie about something unimportant
<i>Derided by</i> <i>Vanity</i>	to laugh at; ridicule an act that is vain; futile or worthless
<i>Garrulous</i>	talking much about unimportant things

THE TELL-TALE HEART

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Great there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was that! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees — very gradually — I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen and you should have seen how wisely I proceeded — with what caution — with what foresight — with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned to look at his door and opened it — oh, so gently! And then when I had made an opening sufficient for my head — I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my

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THE TELL-TALE HEART

Edgar Allan Poe

True! — nervous — very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses — not destroyed — not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily — how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees — very gradually — I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded — with what caution — with what foresight — with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned to latch of his door and opened it — oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my

head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly — very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! — would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously — oh, so cautiously — cautiously (for the hinges creaked) — I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights — every night just at midnight — but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers — of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me, for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back — but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness. (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out — "Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed, listening; — just as I

have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief — oh, no! — it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself — “It is nothing but the wind in the chimney — it is only a mouse crossing the floor,” or “it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp.” Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel — although he neither saw nor heard — to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little — a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it — you cannot imagine how stealthily — stealthily — until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye.

It was open-wide, wide open — and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness — all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person; for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses? — now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed, I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! — do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous; so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me — the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once — once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be herd through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced

the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye — not even his — could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out — no stain of any kind — no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all — ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock — still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, — for what had I now to fear? There entered three men who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled — for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search — search well. I led them, at length, to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own set upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definitiveness — until, at length I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale; — but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased —

and what could I do? It was a *low, dull, quick sound* — *much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath — and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly — more vehemently: but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men — but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what *could* I do? I foamed — I raved — I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder — louder — *louder* — And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! — no, no! They heard! — they suspected! — they *knew*! — they were making a mockery of my horror! — this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! — and now — again! — hark! louder! louder! *louder*! —

"Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! — tear up the planks! — here, here! — it is the beating of his hideous heart!"

THE AUTHOR

Edgar Allan Poe American poet, short-story writer and critic, born in Boston in 1809, died in Baltimore in 1849. His parents, travelling actors, died while he was still a child and he was befriended and educated by John Allan. They parted over the young man's gambling debts, and from then onward Poe's life was a struggle with hack-work, poverty and alcoholism. He wrote some seventy stories and many poems between 1829 and his death, the *Raven* and *Other poems* appearing in 1845. With the "Gold Bug" and "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" he may be recognised as one of the originators of the detective story. But his greatest contribution to literature was an indirect one, for though the fascination his poetry had for Baudelaire and Mallarme his was the strongest original influence on the French Symbolists. Opinion is still sharply divided about the value of his own work.

A symbolist is a person who uses symbols in representing ideas esp. in art or literature. The French and Belgian writers and artists of the late 19th century who rejected realism (a device of surrounding realities) and tried to express idea, emotions, and attitudes by the use of symbolic words, figures, and objects etc.

A REVIEW

Edgar Allen Poe is perhaps the most complex American writer. He can create an atmosphere full of horror, terror, strange fantasies and psychological abnormalities. Along with the smooth sails of normal and natural episodes, sometimes on pages together, he abruptly catches the reader unaware into some kind of a nightmare which does not let him (reader) go thereafter. A reader then lives in the world of horror, stupor, spectre, or discordant realities. And Poe is a consummate artist of creating such an atmosphere most effectively.

In the second paragraph of "The Tell-Tale Heart" immediately after introducing the subject he abruptly but most effectively declares to the reader that he wishes to kill the old man: "I made up my mind to take the life of the old man....." The reader does not expect it so fast, not so early in the story. That is how Poe haunts him, puts him to his hair-end to expect anything happening any time.

He is master of the vision which enables him to create horror through hideous murders, madness, death, shrieks in the stillly nights etc. After reading "The Tell-Tale Heart" and the other stories of its tribe — "The Raven", "The Pit and the Pendulum", "The Black Cat", "Murders in the Rue Morgue", "The Fall of the House of Ushers" — Vincent Buranelli takes Edgar Allen Poe as a "gifted psychopath describing with consummate artistry his personal instabilities and abnormalities." And "He is pictured as appearing and reappearing under the guises of his melancholic, neurastheric, hallucinated, mad and half-mad protagonist". This conception of E. A. Poe has been alive in the circles of critics since long and has been the cause of his own disintegration.

Nevertheless, he remains an artist who takes art for the sake of its purity and neatness, and deliberately chooses his themes to create an effect which he intends to create at will.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Hearken	listen attentively
Dissimulation	concealment; disguise
Creaked	made a sharp grating sound
Vexed	distressed, harassed
Sagacity	wisdom
Scarcely	not common; hard to get; rarely seen
Chucked	quietly laughed
Started	felt suddenly alarmed
Groan	to utter a sound in distress
Stifled	suppressed; choked
Distracted	made crazy
Stalked	to walk or move along stealthily
Unperceived	undiscerned
Crevice	crack or rent
Furious	angry
Hideous	horrible
Marrow	soft tissues in the hollow parts of bones
Stimulates	incites; inspires
Refrained	curbed; restrained
Tattoo	a beat of drum of other signal calling soldiers to quarters
Shrieked	screamed
Scantling	a measured size
Suavity	sweetness

Premises	a building & its adjuncts
Audacity	boldness; daring
Gaped	gaped for breath
Enveloped	covered
Vehemently	vigorously
Gesticulations	vigorous gestures
Raved	talked as if mad
Mockery	ridicule
Derision	act of deriding; mockery

9

THE NECKLACE

Guy De Maupassant

She was one of those pretty, charming young ladies, born, as if through an error of destiny, into a family of clerks. She had no dowry, no hopes, no means of becoming known, appreciated, loved and married by a man either rich or distinguished; and she allowed herself to marry a petty clerk in the office of the Board of Education.

She was simple, not being able to adorn herself, but she was unhappy, as one out of her class; for women belong to no caste, no race, their grace, their beauty and their charm serving them in the place of birth and family. Their inborn finesse, their instinctive elegance, their suppleness of wit, are their only aristocracy, making some daughters of the people the equal of great ladies.

She suffered incessantly, feeling herself born for all delicacies and luxuries. She suffered from the poverty of her apartment, the shabby walls, the worn chairs and the faded stuffs. All these things, which another woman of her station would not have noticed, tortured and angered her. The sight of the little Breton, who made this humble home, awoke in her sad regrets and desperate dreams. She thought of quiet antechambers with their oriental hangings lighted by high bronze torches and of the two great footmen in short trousers who sleep in the large armchairs, made sleepy by the heavy air from the heating apparatus. She thought of large drawing rooms hung in oil silks, of graceful pieces of furniture carrying bric-a-brac of inestimable

value and of the little perfumed coquettish apartments made for five o'clock chats with most intimate friends, men known and sought after, whose attention all women envied and desired.

When she seated herself for dinner before the round table, where the tablecloth had been used three days, opposite her husband who uncovered the tureen with a delighted air, saying: "Oh! the good potpie! I know nothing better than that," she would think of the elegant dinners of the shining silver, of the tapestries peopling the walls with ancient personages and rare birds in the midst of fairy forests; she thought of the exquisite food served on marvelous dishes, of the whispered gallantries, listened to with the smile of the Sphinx while eating the rose-colored flesh of the trout or a chicken's wing.

She had neither frocks nor jewels, nothing. And she loved only those things. She felt that she was made for them. She had such a desire to please, to be sought after, to be clever and courted.

She had a rich friend, a schoolmate at the convent, whom she did not like to visit; she suffered so much when she returned. And she wept for whole days from chagrin, from regret, from despair and disappointment.

One evening her husband returned, elated, bearing in his hand a large envelope.

"Here," he said, "here is something for you."

She quickly tore open the wrapper and drew out a printed card on which were inscribed these words:

The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame George Ramponneau ask the honor of M. and Mme Loisel's company Monday evening, January 18, at the Minister's residence.

Instead of being delighted, as her husband had hoped, she threw the invitation spitefully upon the table, murmuring.

"What do you suppose I want with that?"

"But, my dearie, I thought it would make you happy. You never go out, and this is an occasion, and a fine one! I had a great deal of trouble to get it. Everybody wishes one, and it is very select; not many are given to employees. You will see the whole official world there."

She looked at him with an irritated eye and declared impatiently:

"What do you suppose I have to wear to such a thing as that?"

He had not thought of that; he stammered:

"Why, the dress you wear when we go to the theater. It seems very pretty to me."

He was silent, stupefied, in dismay, at the sight of his wife weeping. Two great tears fell slowly from the corners of her eyes toward the corners of her mouth; he stammered:

"What is the matter? What is the matter?"

By a violent effort she had controlled her vexation and responded in a calm voice, wiping her moist cheeks.

"Nothing. Only I have no dress and consequently I cannot go to this affair. Give your card to some colleague whose wife is better fitted out than I."

He was grieved but answered:

"Let us see, Matilda. How much would a suitable costume cost, something that would serve for other occasions, something very simple?"

She reflected for some seconds, making estimates and thinking of a sum that she could ask for without bringing with it an immediate refusal and a frightened exclamation from the economical clerk.

Finally she said in a hesitating voice.

"I cannot tell exactly, but it seems to me that four hundred francs ought to cover it."

could neither decide to take them nor leave them. Then she asked:

"Have you nothing more?"

"Why, yes. Look for yourself. I do not know what will please you."

Suddenly she discovered in a black satin box a superb necklace of diamonds, and her heart beat fast with an immoderate desire. Her hands trembled as she took them up. She placed them about her throat, against her dress, and remained in ecstasy before them. Then she asked in a hesitating voice full of anxiety:

"Could you lend me this? Only this?"

She fell upon the neck of her friend, embraced her with passion, then went away with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Mme Loisel was a great success. She was the prettiest of all, elegant, gracious, smiling and full of joy. All the men noticed her, asked her name and wanted to be presented. All the members of the Cabinet wished to waltz with her. The minister of education paid her some attention.

She danced with enthusiasm, with passion, intoxicated with pleasure, thinking of nothing, in the triumph of her beauty, in the glory of her success, in a kind of cloud of happiness that came of all this homage and all this admiration, of all these awakened desires and this victory so complete and sweet to the heart of woman.

She went home toward four o'clock in the morning. Her husband had been half asleep in one of the little salons since midnight with three other gentlemen whose wives were enjoying themselves very much.

He threw around her shoulders the wraps they had carried for the coming home, modest garments of everyday wear, whose poverty clashed with the elegance of the ball costume. She felt this and wished to hurry away in order not to be noticed by the other women who were wrapping themselves in rich furs.

Loisel detained her. "Wait," said he. "You will catch cold out there. I am going to call a cab."

But she would not listen and descended the steps rapidly. When they were in the street they found no carriage, and they began to seek for one, hailing the coachmen whom they saw at a distance.

They walked along toward the Seine, hopeless and shivering. Finally they found on the dock one of those old nocturnal coupes that one sees in Paris after nightfall, as if they were ashamed of their misery by day.

It took them as far as their door in Martyr Street, and they went wearily up to their apartment. It was all over for her. And on his part he remembered that he would have to be at the office by ten o'clock.

She removed the wraps from her shoulders before the glass for a final view of herself in her glory. Suddenly she uttered a cry. Her necklace was not around her neck.

Her husband, already half undressed, asked: "What is the matter?"

She turned toward him excitedly:

"I have — I have — I no longer have Madame Forestier's necklace."

He arose in dismay: "What! How is that? It is not possible."

And they looked in the folds of the dress, in the folds of the mantle, in the pockets, everywhere. They could not find it.

He asked: "You are sure you still had it when we left the house?"

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it fall. It must be in the cab."

"Yes, it is probable. Did you take the number?"

"No."

They looked at each other, utterly cast down. Finally Loisel dressed himself again.

"I am going," said he, "over the track where we went on foot, to see if I can find it."

And he went. She remained in her evening gown, not having the force to go to bed, stretched upon a chair, without ambition or thoughts.

Towards seven o'clock her husband returned. He had found nothing.

He went to the Police and to the cab offices and put an advertisement in the newspapers, offering a reward; he did everything that afforded them a suspicion of hope.

She waited all day in a state of bewilderment before this frightful disaster. Loisel returned at evening, with his face harrowed and pale, and had discovered nothing.

"It will be necessary," said he, "to write to your friend that you have broken the clasp of the necklace and that you will have it repaired. That will give us time to turn around."

She wrote as he dictated.

At the end of a week they had lost all hope. And Loisel, older by five years, declared:

"We must take measures to replace this jewel."

The next day they took the box which had inclosed it to the jeweler whose name was on the inside. He consulted his books.

"It is not I, Madame" said he, "who sold this necklace, I only furnished the casket."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, seeking a necklace like the other one, consulting their memories, and ill, both of them with chagrin and anxiety.

In a shop of the Palais-Royal they found a chaplet of diamonds which seemed them exactly like the one they had lost.

It was valued at forty thousand francs. They could get it for thirty-six thousand.

They begged the jeweler not to sell it for three days. And they made an arrangement by which they might return it for thirty-four thousand francs if they found the other one before the end of February.

Loisel possessed eighteen thousand francs which his father had left him. He borrowed the rest.

He borrowed it, asking for a thousand francs of one, five hundred of another, five louis of this one and three louis of that one. He gave notes ruinous promises, took money of usurers and the whole race of lenders. He compromised his whole existence, in fact, risked his signature without even knowing whether he could make it good or not, and, harrassed by anxiety for the future, by the black misery which surrounded him and by the prospect of all physical privations and moral torture, he went to get the new necklace, depositing on the merchant's counter thirty-six thousand francs.

When Mme Loisel took back the jewels to Mme Forestier, the latter said to her in a frigid tone:

"You should have returned them to me sooner, for I might have needed them."

She did not open the jewel box as her friend feared she would. If she should perceive the substitution what would she think? What should she say? Would she take her for a robber?

Mme Loisel now knew the horrible life of necessity. She did her part, however, completely, heroically. It was necessary to pay this frightful debt. She would pay it. They sent away the maid; they changed their lodgings; they rented some rooms under a mansard roof.

She learned the heavy cares of a household, the odious work of a kitchen. She washed the dishes, using her rosy nails upon the greasy pots and the bottoms of the stewpans. She washed the solid linen, the chemises and dishcloths, which she

hung on the line to dry; she took down the refuse to the street each morning and brought up the water, stopping at each landing to breathe. And, clothed like a woman of the people, she went to the grocer's, the butcher's and the fruiterer's with her basket on her arm, shopping, haggling, to the last sou her miserable money."

Every month it was necessary to renew some notes, thus obtaining time, and to pay others.

The husband worked evenings, putting the book of some merchants in order, and nights he often did copying at five sous a page.

And this life lasted for ten years.

At the end of ten years they had restored all, with interest of usurer, and accumulated interest, besides.

Mme Loisel seemed old now. She had become a strong, hard woman, the crude woman of the poor household. Her hair badly dressed, her skirts awry, her hands red, she spoke in a loud tone and washed the floors in large pails of water. But sometimes, when her husband was at the office, she would seat herself before the window and think of that evening party of former times, of that ball where she was so beautiful and so flattered.

How would it have been if she had not lost that necklace? Who knows? How singular is life and how full of changes! How small a thing will ruin or save one!

One Sunday, as she was taking a walk in the Champs Elysees to rid herself of the cares of the week, she suddenly perceived a woman walking with a child. It was Mme Forestier, still young, still pretty, still attractive. Mme Loisel was affected. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that she had paid, she would tell her all. Why not?

She approached her. "Good morning, Jeanne."

Her friend did not recognize her and was astonished to be so familiarly addressed by this common personage. She stammered:

"But, Madame — I do not know — You must be mistaken."

"No, I am Matilda Loisel."

Her friend uttered a cry of astonishment: "Oh! my poor Matilda! How you have changed."

"Yes, I have had some hard days since I saw you, and some miserable ones — and all because of you"

"Because of me? How is that?"

"You recall the diamond necklace that you loaned me to wear to the minister's ball?"

"Yes, very well."

"Well, I lost it."

"How is that, since you returned it to me?"

"I returned another to you exactly like it. And it has taken us ten years to pay for it. You can understand that it was not easy for us who have nothing. But it is finished, and I am decently content."

Mme Forestier stopped short. She said:

"You say that you bought a diamond necklace to replace mine?"

"Yes, you did not perceive it then? They were just alike."

And she smiled with a proud and simple joy. Mme Forestier was touched and took both her hands as she replied:

"Oh, my poor Matilda! Mine were false. They were not worth over five hundred francs!"

THE AUTHOR

Guy De Maupassant: French novelist and short-story writer, born at Tourville-sur-Arques in 1850, died in Paris 1893. At the age of eleven his parents separated; through his mother he met Flaubert, who supervised his early writings. He entered the civil service and worked as a clerk from 1872 until 1880, when the success of *Boule de Suif* enabled him to earn a living writing. Apart from his short stories and novels, including the famous *Pierre et Jean* (1888), he wrote three plays as well as some verse and was one of the most popular and highly-paid writers of his time. His reputation has declined considerably, along with the taste for the particular type of short-story he wrote. But his best work still has a large grateful public, at home and abroad.

A REVIEW

In "The Necklace" Maupassant displays all the qualities in form which distinguish him as master artist of short-story writing. It is a superior work and its plot is conceived in terms of an affecting ironic reversal. Written in 1885, the story always has been singled out as an art finesse containing richness in respect of theme and technique. It describes a human predicament in which the moral and social formidabilities are very stringent.

A reader comes to know that the necklace which Madame Loisel replaces at the cost of her life and her marriage was actually fake and was thought to be real. Madame Loisel has replaced the fake with the genuine, "priding herself on an effort which is revealed on the last sentence of the story to have been totally misdirected." The necklace is easily lost but Madame Loisel's ten years of hardship are involved in replacing it. The entire life has been determined by a single accident which mocks the whole scheme of things in this world. "How strange life is" she says "how fickle. How little is needed to ruin or to save." This is the most stringent irony of it.

The artistry of Maupassant is that he makes all the ingenious combination of the story directed toward a single resolution, displaying all elements of romance and his own type of social realism. In the drama of human life, chance, sometimes, is more powerful than human resolution. It is man's destiny.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Bourgeois</i>	members of the middle class.
<i>Imperceptible</i>	not discernible; which can not be observed
<i>Blandishments</i>	act of expressing fondness
<i>Loges</i>	boxes in a theatre
<i>Procured</i>	obtained
<i>Rhinestone</i>	ear-rings
<i>Bangles</i>	a child's play things, trifling pieces of finery
<i>Recklessly</i>	carelessly
<i>Stupefied</i>	made stupid or senseless, stunned with amazement
<i>Overwhelmed</i>	overspread and crushed by something heavy or strong
<i>Impassive</i>	not showing feelings

10

THE DUCHESS AND THE JEWELLER

Virginia Woolf

Oliver Bacon lived at the top of a house over-looking the Green Park. He had a flat; chairs jutted out at the right angles—chairs covered in hide. Sofas filled the bays of the windows, sofas covered in tapestry. The windows, the three long windows, had the proper allowance of discreet net and figured satin. The mahogany sideboard bulged discreetly with the right brandies, whiskies and liqueurs. And from the middle window he looked down upon the glossy roofs of fashionable cars packed in the narrow straits of Piccadilly. A more central position could not be imagined. And at eight in the morning he would have his breakfast brought in on a tray by a man-servant: the man-servant would unfold his crimson dressing-gown; he would rip his letters open with his long pointed nails and would extract thick white cards of invitation upon which the engraving stood up roughly from duchesses, countesses, viscountesses and Honourable Ladies. Then he would wash; then he would eat his toast; then he would read his paper by the bright burning fire of electric coals.

'Behold Oliver,' he would say, addressing himself. 'You who began life in a filthy little alley, you who...', and he would look down at his legs, so shapely in their perfect trousers; at his boots; at his spats. They were all shapely, shining; cut from the best cloth by the best scissors in Savile Row. But he dismantled himself often and became again a little boy in a dark alley. He had once thought that the height of his ambition — selling stolen dogs to fashionable women in Whitechapel. And once he had been done. 'Oh, Oliver,' his mother had wailed. 'Oh, Oliver!

When will you have sense, my son?... Then he had gone behind a counter; had sold cheap watches; then he had taken a wallet to Amsterdam... At that memory he would chuckle — the old Oliver remembering the young. Yes, he had done well with the three diamonds; also there was the commission on the emerald. After that he went into the private room behind the shop in Hatton Garden; the room with the scales, the safe, the thick magnifying glasses. And then...and then...He chuckled. When he passed through the knots of jewellers in the hot evening who were discussing prices, gold mines, diamonds, reports from South Africa, one of them would lay a finger to the side of his nose and murmur, 'Hum-m-m,' as he passed. It was no more than a murmur; no more than a nudge on the shoulder, a finer on the nose, a buzz that ran through the cluster of jewellers in Hatton Garden on a hot afternoon — oh, many years ago now! But still Oliver felt it purring down his spine, the nudge, the murmur that meant, "Look at him — young Oliver, the young jeweller — there he goes." Young he was then. And he dressed better and better; and had, first a hansom cab; then a car; and first he went up to the dress circle, then down into the stalls. And he had a villa at Richmond, overlooking the river, with trellises of red roses; and Mademoiselle used to pick one every morning and stick it in his buttonhole.

'So,' said Oliver Bacon, rising and stretching his legs. 'So....' [And he stood beneath the picture of an old lady on the mantelpiece and raised his hands. 'I have kept my word,' he said, laying his hands together, palm to palm, as if he were doing homage to her. 'I have won my bet.' That was so; he was the richest jeweller in England; but his nose, which was long and flexible, like an elephant's trunk, seemed to say by its curious quiver at the nostrils (but it seemed as if the whole nose quivered, not only the nostrils) that he was not satisfied yet; still smelt something under the ground a little farther off. Imagine a giant hog in a pasture rich with truffles; after unearthing this truffle and that, still it smells a bigger, a blacker truffle under the ground farther off. So Oliver snuffed always in the rich earth of Mayfair another truffle, a blacker, a bigger farther off.

Now then he straightened the pearl in his tie, cased himself in his smart blue overcoat; took his yellow gloves and his cane; and swayed as he descended the stairs and half snuffed, half sighed through his long sharp nose as he passed out into Piccadilly. For was he not still a sad man, a dissatisfied man, a man who seeks something that is hidden, though he had won his bet?

He swayed slightly as he walked, as the camel at the zoo sways from side to side when it walks along the asphalt paths laden with grocers and their wives eating from paper bags and throwing little bits of silver paper crumpled up on to the path. The camel despises the grocers; the camel is dissatisfied with its lot; the camel sees the blue lake, and the fringe of palm trees in front of it. So the great jeweller, the greatest jeweller in the whole world, swung down Piccadilly, perfectly dressed, with his gloves, with his cane; but dissatisfied still, till he reached the dark little shop, that was famous in France, in Germany, in Austria, in Italy, and all over America — the dark little shop in the street off Bond Street.

As usual, he strode through the shop without speaking, through the four men, the two old men, Marshall and Spencer, and the two young men, Hammond and Wicks, stood straight and looked at him, envying him. It was only with one finger of the amber-coloured glove, wagging, that he acknowledged their presence. And he went in and shut the door of his private room behind him.

Then he unlocked the grating that barred the window. The cries of Bond Street came in the purr of the distant traffic. The light from reflectors at the back of the shop struck upwards. One tree waved six green leaves, for it was June, but Mademoiselle had married Mr. Pedder of the local brewery — no one stuck roses in his buttonhole now.

'So,' he half sighed, half snorted, 'so—'

Then he touched a spring in the wall and slowly the panelling slid open, and behind it were the steel safes, five, no

six of them, all of burnished steel. He twisted a key; unlocked one; then another. Each was lined with a pad of deep crimson velvet; in each lay jewels — bracelets, necklaces, rings, tiaras, ducal coronets; loose stones in glass shells; rubies; emeralds, pearls, diamonds. All safe, shining, cool, yet burning, eternally with their own compressed light.

'Tears!' said Oliver, looking at the pearls.

'Gunpowder!' he continued, rattling the diamonds so that they flashed and blazed.

'Gunpowder enough to blow Mayfair — sky high, high, high!' He threw his head back and made a sound like a horse neighing as he said it.

The telephone buzzed obsequiously in a low muted voice on his table. He shut the safe.

'In ten minutes,' he said. 'Not before.' And he sat down at his desk and looked at the heads of Roman emperors that were graven on his sleeve links. And again he dismantled himself and became once more the little boy playing marbles in the alley where they sell stolen dogs on Sunday. He became that wily astute little boy, with lips like wet cherries. He dabbled his fingers in ropes of tripe; he dipped them in pans of frying fish; he dodged in and out among the crowds. He was slim, lissome, with eyes like licked stones. And now — now — the hands of the clock ticked on, one, two, three, four....The Duchess of Lambourne waited his pleasure; the Duchess of Lambourne, daughter of a hundred Earls. She would wait for ten minutes on a chair at the counter. She would wait his pleasure. She would wait till he was ready to see her. He watched the clock in its shagreen case. The hand moved on. With each tick the clock handed him — so it seemed — pate de foie grass, a glass of champagne, another of fine brandy, a cigar costing one guinea. The clock laid them on the table beside him as the ten minutes passed. Then he heard soft slow footsteps approaching; a rustle in the corridor. The door opened. Mr. Hammond flattened himself against the wall.

'Her Grace!' he announced.

And he waited there, flattened against the wall.

And Oliver, rising, could hear the rustle of the dress of the Duchess as she came down the passage. Then she loomed up, filling the door, filling the room with the aroma, the prestige, the arrogance, the pomp, the pride of all the Dukes and Duchesses swollen in one wave. And as a wave breaks, she broke, as she sat down, spreading and splashing and falling over Oliver Bacon, the great jeweller, covering him with sparkling bright colours, green, rose, violet; and odours; and iridescences; and rays shooting from fingers, nodding from plumes, flashing from silks; for she was very large, very fat, tightly girt in pink taffeta, and past her prime. As a parasol with many flounces, as a peacock with many feathers, shuts its flounces, folds its feathers, so she subsided and shut herself as she sank down in the leather armchair.

'Good morning. Mr. Bacon,' said the Duchess. And she held out her hand which came through the slit of her white glove. And Oliver bent low as he shook it. And as their hands touched the link was forged between them once more. They were friends, yet enemies; he was master, she was mistress; each cheated the other, each needed the other, each feared the other, each felt this and knew this every time they touched hands thus in the little back room with the white light outside, and the tree with its six leaves, and the sound of the street in the distance and behind them the safes.

'And today, Duchess — what can I do for you today?' said Oliver, very softly.

The Duchess opened her heart, her private heart, gaped wide. And with a sigh but no words she took from her bag a long washleather pouch — it looked like a lean yellow ferret. And from a slit in the ferret's belly she dropped pearls — ten pearls. They rolled from the slit in the ferret's belly — one, two, three, four — like the eggs of some heavenly bird.

'All's that's left me, dear Mr. Bacon,' she moaned. Five, six, seven — down they rolled, down the slopes of the vast mountain sides that fell between her knees into one narrow valley — the

eighth, the ninth, and the tenth. There they lay in the glow of the peach-blossom taffeta. Ten pearls.

'From the Appleby cincture,' she mourned. 'The last....the last of them all.'

Oliver stretched out and took one of the pearls between finger and thumb. It was round, it was lustrous. But real was it, or false? Was she lying again? Did she dare?

She laid her plump padded finger across her lips. 'If the Duke knew....' she whispered. 'Dear Mr. Bacon, a bit of bad luck...

Been gambling again, had she?

'That villain! That sharper!' she hissed.

The man with the chipped cheek bone? A badun. And the Duke was straight as a poker, with side whiskers; would cut her off, shut her up down there if he knew — what I know, thought Oliver, and glanced at the safe.

'Araminta, Daphne, Diana,' she moaned. 'It's for them.'

The ladies Araminta, Daphne, Diana — her daughters. He knew them; adored them. But it was Diana he loved.

'You have all my secrets,' she leered. Tears slid; tears fell; tears, like diamonds, collecting powder in the ruts of her cherry blossom cheeks.

'Old friend,' she murmured, 'Old friend.'

'Old friend,' he repeated, 'old friend,' as if he licked the words.

'How much?' he queried.

She covered the pearls with her hand.

'Twenty thousand,' she whispered.

But was it real or false, the one he held in his hand? The Appleby cincture — hadn't she sold it already? he would ring for

Spencer or Hammond. 'Take it and test it,' he would say. He stretched to the bell.

'You will come down tomorrow?' she urged, she interrupted. 'The Prime Minister — His Minister — His Royal Highness...' She stopped. 'And Diana....' she added.

Oliver took his hand off the bell.

He looked past her, at the backs of the houses in Bond Street. But he saw, not the houses in Bond Street, but a dimpling river; and trout rising and salmon; and the Prime Minister; and himself too, in white waistcoat; and then, Diana. He looked down at the pearl in his hand. But now could he test it, in the light of river, in the light of the eyes of Diana? But the eyes of the Duchess were on him.

'Twenty thousand,' she moaned. 'My honour!'

The honour of the mother of Diana! He drew his cheque book towards him; he took out his pen.

'Twenty —' he wrote. Then he stopped writing. The eyes of the old woman in the picture were on him — of the old woman his mother.

'Oliver!' she warned him. 'Have sense! Don't be a fool!'

'Oliver!' the Duchess entreated — it was 'Oliver' now, not 'Mr. Bacon.' 'You'll come for a long weekend?'

Alone in the woods with Diana! Riding alone in the woods with Diana!

'Thousand,' he wrote, and signed it.

'Here you are,' he said.

And there opened all the flounces of the parasol, all the plumes of the peacock, the radiance of the wave, the swords and spears of Agincourt, as she rose from her chair. And the two old men and the two young men, Spencer and Marshall, Wicks and Hammond, flattened themselves behind the counter conveying him as he led her through the shop to the door. And he waggled

his yellow glove in their faces, and she held her honour — a cheque for twenty thousand pounds with his signature — quite firmly in her hands.

'Are they false or are they real?' asked Oliver, shutting his private door. There they were, ten pearls on the blotting-paper on the table. He took them to the window. He held them under his lens to the light... This, then, was the truffle he had routed out of the earth! Rotten at the centre — rotten at the core!

'Forgive me, oh, my mother!' he sighed, raising his hands as if he asked pardon of the old woman in the picture. And again he was little boy in the alley where they sold dogs on Sunday.

'For,' he murmured, laying the palms of his hands together, 'it is to be a long week-end.'

THE AUTHOR

Virginia Woolf; English novelist and essayist, born in London 1882, committed suicide in the River Ouse in 1941. She was one of the most important members of the highly influential Bloomsbury Group, writing reviews and two novels before manifesting her peculiarly individual art as a novelist. Her works also included several volumes of essays and two biographies. Her finest novels are exquisite examples of the deeply subjective, interior monologue method in fiction.

A REVIEW

"*The Duchess and the Jeweller*" is not a short story of the kind of 'Kew Gardens' in which there is no philosophy, no moral and no form in the usual sense. Woolf's belief, however, that poetry does not deserve any supremacy over prose and the writers who keep 'beautiful prose alive' deserve the highest praise, is maintained in this story. The story from its beginning to the very end is bedecked with beautiful and evocative words, phrases, and sentences, that it looks like an effort to realize the adequacy of prose.

The short-story is a fragmented and restless piece of art in which an artist has to maintain his impersonality. The present generation can hope only to achieve "fragments — paragraphs — a page perhaps; but no more". But these paragraphs or pages must attain some kind of beauty for their own timelessness and universality. "*The Duchess and the Jeweller*" is one of those stories which are set in the sensibility and historicity of their own days of England: the high-ups are coming down. The nobility is suffering from moral decadence; and the commoners have taken the lead in spite of their psychological fixations.

The style of the story depicts Woolf's belief that the distinction between poetry and prose is not quite well founded. The fact recording power of fiction is made subservient and the fiction (irreality of the story even if it is set in the cultural surroundings) is made dominant in its treatment.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Jutted:-</i>	projected
<i>Bays of the windows:-</i>	an opening in a wall line, as for a window
<i>Discreet:-</i>	prudent
<i>Alley:-</i>	a lane in a garden or park; a narrow street
<i>Spats:-</i>	cloth covering for ankle or instep
<i>Chuckle:-</i>	to laugh softly in a low tone
<i>Purring:-</i>	a sound made by a cat or any sound like this
<i>Nudge:-</i>	a gentle push with elbow
<i>Trellises:-</i>	lattices
<i>Quiver:-</i>	tremble; shake in motion
<i>Truffles:-</i>	any of various fungi that grow underground
<i>Astute:-</i>	shrewd; keen; crafty
<i>Shagreen:-</i>	rough; made from the skin of horse, camel
<i>Parasol:-</i>	a light umbrella carried by women
<i>Flounces:-</i>	twists, turns; jerks
<i>Ferret:-</i>	a small, weasel like animal
<i>Cincture:-</i>	enclosure
<i>Lustrous:-</i>	shining; bright
<i>Chipped cheek bone:-</i>	fine shaving of the cheek bone

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THE SHADOW IN THE ROSE GARDEN

D.H. Lawrence

A rather small young man sat by the window of a pretty seaside cottage trying to persuade himself that he was reading the newspaper. It was about half-past eight in the morning. Outside, the glory roses hung in the morning sunshine like little bowls of fire tipped up. The young man looked at the table, then at the clock, then at his own big silver watch. An expression of stiff endurance came on to his face. Then he rose and reflected on the oil-paintings that hung on the walls of the room, giving careful but hostile attention to "The Stag at Bay." He tried the lid of the piano, and found it locked. He caught sight of his own face in a little mirror, pulled his brown moustache, and an alert interest sprang into his eyes. He was not ill-favoured. He twisted his moustache. His figure was rather small, but alert and vigorous. As he turned from the mirror a look of self-commiseration mingled with his appreciation of his own physiognomy.

In a state of self-suppression, he went through into the garden. His jacket, however, did not look dejected. It was new, and had a smart and self-confident air, sitting upon a confident body. He contemplated the Tree of Heaven that flourished by the lawn, then sauntered on the next plant. There was more promise in a crooked apple tree covered with brown-red fruit. Glancing round, he broke off an apple and, with his back to the house, took a clean, sharp bite. To his surprise the fruit was sweet. He took another. Then again he turned to survey the bedroom windows overlooking the garden. He started, seeing a woman's figure; but

it was only his wife. She was gazing across to the sea, apparently ignorant of him.

For a moment or two he looked at her, watching her. She was a good-looking woman, who seemed older than he, rather pale, but healthy, her face yearning. Her rich auburn hair was heaped in folds on her forehead. She looked apart from him and his world, gazing away to the sea. It irked her husband that she should continue abstracted and in ignorance of him; he pulled poppy fruits and threw them at the window. She started, glanced at him with a wild smile, and looked away again. Then almost immediately she left the window. He went indoors to meet her. She had a fine carriage, very proud, and wore a dress of soft white muslin.

"I've been waiting long enough," he said.

"For me or for breakfast?" she said lightly. "You know we said nine o'clock. I should have thought you could have slept after the journey."

"You know I'm always up at five, and I couldn't stop in bed after six. You might as well be in pit as in bed, on a morning like this."

"I shouldn't have thought the pit would occur to you, here."

She moved about examining the room, looking at the ornaments under glass covers. He, planted on the hearthrug, watched her rather uneasily, and grudgingly indulgent. She shrugged her shoulders at the apartment.

"Come," she said, taking his arm, "let us go into the garden till Mrs. Coates brings the tray."

"I hope she'll be quick," he said, pulling his moustache. She gave a short laugh, and leaned on his arm as they went. He had lighted a pipe.

Mrs. Coates entered the room as they went down the steps. The delightful, erect old lady hastened to the window for a good view of her visitors. Her china-blue eyes were bright as she

watched the young couple go down the path, he walking in an easy, confident fashion, with his wife on his arm. The landlady began talking to herself in a soft, Yorkshire accent.

"Just of a height they are. She wouldn't ha' married a man less than herself in stature, I think, though he's not her equal otherwise." Here her granddaughter came in setting a tray on the table. The girl went to the old woman's side.

"He's been eating the apples, grain," she said.

"Has he, my pet? Well, if he's happy, why not?"

Outside, the young, well-favoured man listened with impatience to the chink of the teacups. At last, with a sigh of relief, the couple came in to breakfast. After he had eaten for some time, he rested a moment and said.

"Do you think it's any better place than Bridlington?"

"I do," she said, "infinitely! Besides, I am at home here — it's not like a strange seaside place to me."

"How long were you here?"

"Two years."

He ate reflectively.

"I should ha' thought you'd rather go to a fresh place; he said at length.

She sat very silent, and then, delicately, put out a feeler.

"Why?" she said. "Do you think I shan't enjoy myself?"

He laughed comfortably, putting the marmalade thick on his bread.

"I hope so," he said.

She again took no notice of him.

"But don't say anything about it in the village, Frank," she said casually. "Don't say who I am, or that I used to live here."

There's nobody I want to meet, particularly, and we should never feel free if they knew me again?"

"Why did you come, then?"

"Why?' Can't you understand why?"

"Not if you don't want to know anybody."

"I came to see the place, not the people."

He did not say any more.

"Women," she said, "are different from men. I don't know why I wanted to come — but I did."

She helped him to another cup of coffee, solicitously.

"Only," she resumed, "don't talk about me in the village."

She laughed shakily. "I don't want my past brought up against me, you knew," And she moved the crumbs on the cloth with her finger-tip.

He looked at her as he drank his coffee; he sucked his moustache, and putting down his cup, said phlegmatically:

"I'll bet you've had a lot of past."

She looked with a little guiltiness, that flattered him, down at the table cloth.

"Well," she said, caressive, "you won't give me away, who I am, will you?"

He was pleased.

She remained silent. After a moment or two she lifted her head, saying:

"I've got to arrange with Mrs. Coates, and do various things. So you'd better go out by yourself this morning — and we'll be in to dinner at one."

"But you can't be arranging with Mrs. Coates all morning," he said.

"Oh well — then I've some letters to write, and I must get that mark out of my skirt. I've got plenty of little things to do this morning. you'd better go out by yourself."

He perceived that she wanted to be rid of him, so that when she went upstairs, he took his hat and lounged out on to the cliffs, suppressedly angry.

Presently she too came out. She wore a hat with roses, and a long lace scarf hung over her white dress. Rather nervously, she put up her sunshade, and her face was half-hidden in its coloured shadow. She went along the narrow track of flag-stones that were worn hollow by the feet of the fishermen. She seemed to be avoiding her surroundings, as if she remained safe in the little obscurity of her parasol.

She passed the church, and went down the lane till she came to a high wall by the wayside. Under this she went slowly, stopping at length by an open doorway, which shone like a picture of light in the dark wall. There in the magic beyond the doorway, patterns of shadow lay on the sunny court, on the blue and white sea-pebbles of its paving, while a green lawn glowed beyond, where a bay tree glittered at the edges. She tiptoed nervously into the courtyard, glancing at the house that stood in shadow. The uncurtained windows looked black and soulless, the kitchen door stood open. Irresolutely she took a step forward, and again forward leaning, yearning, towards the garden beyond.

She had almost gained the corner of the house when a heavy step came crunching through the trees. A gardener appeared before her. He held a wicker tray on which were rolling great, dark red gooseberries, over-ripe. He moved slowly.

"The garden isn't open today," he said quietly to the attractive woman, who was poised for retreat.

For a moment she was silent with surprise. How should it be public at all?

"When is it open?" she asked, quick-witted.

"The rector lets visitors in on Fridays and Tuesdays."

She stood still, reflecting. How strange to think of the rector opening his garden to the public!

"But everybody will be at church," she said coaxingly to the man. "There'll be nobody here, will there?"

He moved, and the big gooseberries rolled.

"The rector lives at the new rectory," he said.

The two stood still. He did not like to ask her to go. At last she turned to him with a winning smile.

"Might I have one peep at the roses?" she coaxed, with pretty wilfulness.

"I don't suppose it would matter," he said, moving aside; "you won't stop long—"

She went forward, forgetting the gardener in a moment. Her face became strained, her movements eager. Glancing round, she saw all the windows giving on to the lawn were curtainless and dark. The house had a sterile appearance, as if it were still used, but not inhabited. A shadow seemed to go over her. She went across the lawn towards the garden, through an arch of crimson ramblers, a gate of colour. There beyond lay the soft blue sea within the bay, misty with morning, and the furthest headland of black rock jutting dimly out between blue and blue of the sky and water. Her face began to shine, transfigured with pain and joy. At her feet the garden fell steeply, all a confusion of flowers, and away below was the darkness of treetops covering the beck.

She turned to the garden that shone with sunny flowers around her. She knew the little corner where was the seat beneath the yew tree. Then there was the terrace where a great host of flowers shone, and from this, two paths went down, one at each side of the garden. She closed her sunshade and walked slowly among the many flowers. All round were rose bushes, big banks of roses, then roses hanging and tumbling from pillars, or roses balanced on the standard bushes. By the open earth were many

other flowers. If she lifted her head, the sea was upraised beyond, and the Cape.

Slowly she went down one path, lingering, like one who has gone back into the past. Suddenly she was touching some heavy crimson roses that were soft as velvet, touching them thoughtfully, without knowing, as a mother sometimes fondles the hand of her child. She leaned slightly forward to catch the scent. Then she wandered on in abstraction. Sometimes a flame-coloured, scentless rose would hold her arrested. She stood gazing at it as if she could not understand it. Again the same softness of intimacy came over her, as she stood before a tumbling heap of pink petals. Then she wondered over the white rose, that was greenish, like ice, in the centre. So slowly, like a white, pathetic butterfly, she drifted down the path, coming at last to a tiny terrace all full of roses. They seemed to fill the place, a sunny, gay throng. She was shy of them, they were so many and so bright. They seemed to be conversing and laughing. She felt herself in a strange crowd. It exhilarated her, carried her out of herself. She flushed with excitement. The air was pure scent.

Hastily, she went to a little seat among the white roses, and sat down. Her scarlet sunshade made a hard blot of colour. She sat quite still, feeling her own existence lapse. She was no more than a rose, a rose that could not quite come into blossom, but remained tense. A little fly dropped on her knee, on her white dress. She watched it, as if it had fallen on a rose. She was not herself.

Then she started cruelly as a shadow crossed her and a figure moved into her sight. It was a man who had come in slippers, unheard. He wore a linen coat. The morning was shattered, the spell vanished away. She was only afraid of being questioned. He came forward. She rose. Then, seeing him, the strength went from her and she sank on the seat again.

He was a young man, military in appearance, growing, slightly stout. His black hair was brushed smooth and bright, his moustache was waxed. But there was something rambling in his gait. She looked up, blanched to the lips, and saw his eyes. They

were black, and stared without seeing. They were not a man's eyes. He was coming towards her.

He stared at her fixedly, made an unconscious salute, and sat down beside her on the seat. He moved on the bench, shifted his feet, saying, in a gentlemanly, military voice:

"I don't disturb you — do I?"

She was mute and helpless. He was scrupulously dressed in dark clothes and a linen coat. She could not move. Seeing his hands, with the ring she knew so well upon the little finger, she felt as if she were going dazed. The whole world was deranged. She sat unavailing. For his hands, her symbols of passionate love, filled her with horror as they rested now on his strong thighs.

"May I smoke?" he asked intimately, almost secretly, his hand going to his pocket.

She could not answer, but it did not matter, he was in another world. She wondered, craving, if he recognized her — if he could recognize her. She sat pale with anguish. But she had to go through it.

"I haven't got any tobacco," he said thoughtfully.

But she paid no heed to his words, only she attended to him. Could he recognize her, or was it all gone? She sat still in a frozen kind of suspense.

"I smoke John Cotton," he said, "and I must economize with it, it is expensive. You know, I'm not very well off while these law suits are going on."

"No," she said, and her heart was cold, her soul kept rigid.

He moved, made a loose salute, rose, and went away. She sat motionless. She could see his shape, the shape she had loved with all her passion: his compact, soldier's head, his fine figure now slackened. And it was not he. It only filled her with horror too difficult to know.

Suddenly he came again, his hand in his jacket pocket.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he said. "Perhaps I shall be able to see things more clearly."

He sat down beside her again, filling a pipe. She watched his hands with the fine strong fingers. They had always inclined to tremble slightly. It has surprised her, long ago, in such a healthy man. Now they moved inaccurately, and the tobacco hung raggedly out of the pipe.

"I have legal business to attend to. Legal affairs are always so uncertain. I tell my solicitor exactly, precisely what I want, but I can never get it done."

She sat and heard him talking. But it was not he. Yet those were the hands she had kissed, there were the glistening, strange black eyes that she had loved. Yet it was not he. She sat motionless with horror and silence. He dropped his tobacco pouch, and groped for it on the ground. Yet she must wait to see if he would recognize her. Why could she not go! — In a moment he rose.

"I must go at once," he said. "The owl is coming." Then he added confidentially: "His name isn't really the owl, but I call him that. I must go and see if he has come."

She rose too. He stood before her, uncertain. He was a handsome, soldierly fellow, and a lunatic. Her eyes searched him, and searched him, to see if he would recognize her, if she could discover him.

"You don't know me?" she asked, from the terror of her soul, standing alone.

He looked back at her quizzically. She had to bear his eyes. They gleamed on her, but with no intelligence. He was drawing nearer to her.

"Yes, I do know you," he said, fixed, intent, but mad, drawing his face nearer hers. Her horror was too great. The powerful lunatic was coming too near to her.

A man approached, hastening.

"The garden isn't open this morning," she said.

The deranged man stopped and looked at him. The keeper went to the seat and picked up the tobacco pouch left lying there.

"Don't leave your tobacco, sir," he said, taking it to the gentleman in the linen coat.

"I was just asking this lady to stay to lunch," the latter said politely. "She is a friend of mine."

The woman turned and walked swiftly, blindly, between the sunny roses, out from the garden, past the house with the blank, dark windows, through the sea-pebbled courtyard to the street. Hastening and blind, she went forward without hesitating, not knowing whither. Directly she came to the house she went upstairs, took off her hat, and sat down on the bed. It was as if some membrane had been torn in two in her, so that she was not an entity that could think and feel. She sat staring across at the window, where an ivy spray waved slowly up and down in — the sea wind. There was some of the uncanny luminousness of the sunlit sea in the air. She sat perfectly still, without any being. She only felt she might be sick, and it might be blood that was loose in her torn entrails. She sat perfect still and passive.

After a time she heard the hard tread of her husband on the floor below, and, without herself changing, she registered his movement. She heard his rather disconsolate footsteps go out again, then his voice speaking, answering, growing cheery, and his solid tread drawing near.

He entered, ruddy, rather pleased, an air of complacency about his alert, sturdy figure. She moved stiffly. He faltered in his approach.

"What's the matter?" he asked, a tinge of impatience in his voice. "Aren't you feeling well?"

This was torture to her.

"Quite," she replied.

His brown eyes became puzzled and angry.

"What is the matter?" he said.

"Nothing."

He took a few strides, and stood obstinately looking out of the window.

"Have you run up against anybody?" he asked.

"Nobody who knows me," she said.

His hands began to twitch. It exasperated him, that she was no more sensible of him than if he did not exist. Turning on her at length, driven, he asked:

"Something has upset you, hasn't it?"

"No, why?" she said, neutral. He did not exist for her, except as an irritant.

His anger once, filling the veins in his throat.

"It seems like it," he said, making an effort not to show his anger, because there seemed no reason for it. He went away downstairs. She sat still on the bed, and with the residue of feeling left to her, she disliked him because he tormented her. The time went by. She could smell the dinner being served, the smoke of her husband's pipe from the garden. But she could not move. She had no being. There was a tinkle of the bell. She heard him come indoors. And then he mounted the stairs again. At every step her heart grew tight in her. He opened the door.

"Dinner is on the table," he said.

It was difficult for her to endure his presence, for he would interfere with her. She could not recover her life. She rose stiffly and went down. She could neither hear nor talk during the meal. She sat absent, torn, without being of her own. He tried to go on as if nothing were the matter. But at last he became silent with fury. As soon as it was possible, she went upstairs again, and locked the bedroom door. She must be alone. He went with his pipe into the garden. All his suppressed anger against her who held herself superior to him filled and blackened his heart. Though he had not known it, yet he had never really won her,

she had never loved him. He was only a labouring electrician in the mine, she was superior to him. He had always given way to her. But all the while, the injury and ignominy had been working in his soul, because she did not hold him seriously, and now all his rage came up against her.

He turned and went indoors. The third time, she heard him mounting the stairs. Her heart stood still. He turned the catch and pushed the door — it was locked. He tried it again, harder. Her heart was standing still.

"Have you fastened the door?" he asked quietly, because of the landlady.

"Yes. Wait a minute."

She rose and turned the lock, afraid he would burst it. She felt hatred towards him, because he did not leave her free. He entered, his pipe between his teeth, and she returned to her old position on the bed. He closed the door and stood with his back to it.

"What's the matter?" he asked determinedly.

She was sick with him. She could not look at him.

"Can't you leave me alone?" she replied, averting her face from him.

He looked at her quickly, fully, wincing with ignominy. Then he seemed to consider for a moment.

"There's something up with you, isn't there?" he asked definitely.

"Yes," she said, "but that's no reason why you should torment me."

"I don't torment you. What's the matter?"

"Why should you know?" she cried, in hate and desperation.

Something snapped. He started and caught his pipe as it fell from his mouth. Then he pushed forward the bitten-off

mouthpiece with his tongue, took it from off his lips, and looked at it. Then he put out his pipe, and brushed the ash from his waistcoat. After which he raised his head.

"I want to know," he said. His face was greyish pale, and set uglily.

Neither looked at the other. She knew he was fired now. His heart was pounding heavily. She hated him, but she could not withstand him. Suddenly she lifted her head and turned on him.

"What right have you to know?" she asked.

He looked at her. She felt a pang of surprise for his tortured eyes and his fixed face. But her heart hardened swiftly. She had never loved him. She did not love him now.

But suddenly she lifted her head again swiftly, like a thing that tries to get free. She wanted to be free of it. It was not him so much, but it, something she had put on herself, that bound her so horribly. And having put the bond on herself, it was hardest to take it off. But now she hated everything and felt destructive. He stood with his back to the door, fixed, as if he would oppose her eternally, till she was extinguished. She looked at him. Her eyes were cold and hostile. His workman's hands spread on the panels of the door behind him.

"You know I used to live here?" she began, in a hard voice, as if wilfully to wound him. He braced himself against her, and nodded.

"Well, I was companion to Miss Birch of Torril Hall — she and the rector were friends, and Archie was the rector's son." There was a pause. He listened without knowing what was happening. He stared at his wife. She was squatted in her white dress on the bed, carefully folding and refolding the hem on her skirt. Her voice was full of hostility.

"He was an officer — a sub-lieutenant — then he quarrelled with his colonel and came out of the army. At any rate" — she plucked at her skirt hem, her husband stood

motionless, watching her movements which filled his veins with madness — "he was awfully fond of me, and I was of him — awfully."

"How old was he?" asked the husband.

"When? — when I first knew him? or when he went away?"

"When you first knew him."

"When I first knew him, he was twenty-six — now — he's thirty-one — nearly thirty-two — because I'm twenty-nine, and he is nearly three years older—"

She lifted her head and looked at the opposite wall.

"And what then?" said her husband.

She hardened herself, and said callously:

"We were as good as engaged for nearly a year, though nobody knew — at last — they talked — but — it wasn't open. Then he went away —"

"He chucked you?" said the husband brutally, wanting to hurt her into contact with himself. Her heart rose wildly with rage. Then "Yes," she said, to anger him. He shifted from one foot to the other, giving a "Ph!" of rage. There was silence for a time.

"Then," she resumed, her pain giving a mocking note to her words, "he suddenly went out to fight in Africa, and almost the very day I first met you, I heard from Miss Birch he'd got sunstroke — and two months after that he was dead —"

"That was before you took on with me?" said the husband.

There was no answer. Neither spoke for a time. He had not understood. His eyes were contracted uglily.

"So you've been looking at your old courting places!" he said. "That was what you wanted to go out by yourself for this morning."

Still she did not answer him anything. He went away from the door to the window. He stood with his hands behind him, his back to her. She looked at him. His hands seemed gross to her, the back of his head paltry.

At length, almost against his will, he turned round, asking:

"How long were you carrying on with him?"

"What do you mean?" she replied coldly.

"I mean how long were you carrying on with him?"

She lifted her head, averting her face from him. She refused to answer. Then she said:

"I don't know what you mean, by carrying on. I loved him from the first days I met him — two months after I went to stay with Miss Birch."

"And do you reckon he loved you?" he jeered.

"I know he did."

"How do you know, if he'd have no more to do with you?"

There was a long silence of hate and suffering.

"And how far did it go between you?" he asked at length, in a frightened, stiff voice.

"I hate your not-straightforward questions," she cried, beside herself with is baiting. "We loved each other, and we were lovers — we were. I don't care what you think: what have you got to do with it? We were lovers before ever I knew you —"

"Lovers — lovers," he said, white with fury. "You mean you had your fling with an army man, and then came to me to marry you when you'd done —"

She sat swallowing her bitterness. There was a long pause.

"Do you mean to say used to go — the whole hogger?" he asked, still incredulous.

"Why, what else do you think I mean?" she cried brutally.

He shrank, and became white, impersonal. There was a long, paralysed silence. He seemed to have gone small.

"You never thought to tell me all this before I married you," he said, with bitter irony, at last.

"You never asked me," she replied.

"Well, then, you should think."

He stood with expressionless, almost childlike set face, revolving many thoughts, whilst his heart was mad with anguish.

Suddenly she added:

"And I saw him today," she said. "He is not dead, 'he's mad."

Her husband looked at her, startled.

"Mad!" he said involuntarily.

"A lunatic," she said. It almost cost her reason to utter the word. There was a pause.

"Did he know you?" asked the husband, in a small voice.

"No," she said.

He stood and looked at her. At last he had learned the width of breach between them. She still squatted on the bed. He could not go near her. It would be violation to each of them to be brought into contact with the other. The thing must work itself out. They were both shocked so much, they were impersonal, and no longer hated each other. After some minutes he left her and went out.

THE AUTHOR

D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930) was born at Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. He was a miner's son; his mother had been a school teacher and she aspired to refinement and a better future for her children. The conflict of interests in his home, between his uncultured father and his increasingly resentful mother coloured Lawrence's childhood. His mother succeeded in turning their five children away from their father and the unhappy man could hardly be blamed for the unpleasant scenes that sometimes occurred.

Sons and Lovers, for many people the favourite of Lawrence's novels, was published in 1913. A novel, *The Sisters*, which he began while in Europe with Frieda in 1913 eventually became two novels, and the first one was published in 1915 as *The Rainbow*. He completed *Women in Love*, the second novel of *The Sisters* Material, *Twilight in Italy* (1916), *Amores: Poems* (1916), and the collection of poems called *Look! We have Come Through!* (1917).

Kangaroo (1923) was written during a four-month stay in New South Wales, where Lawrence met Molly Skinner and with whom he collaborated on *The Boy in the Bush* (1924). *St. Mawr* (1925), with 'The Princess' reflects the feeling, reinforced by a visit to England, that the country was heading for the end; *The Plumed Serpent* (1926) was inspired by his time in Mexico; *The Woman who Rode Away* and *Other Stories* (1928) expresses, in the title story, Lawrence's belief that regeneration was desperately needed by western civilization. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was begun after Lawrence left England for Italy in 1926 and was first published in 1928, but not in England in its unexpurgated form until 1961, after a trial at which the England literary establishment closed ranks against the censor.

"The Man Who Died" is regarded by a few critics as his finest story and the collections of stories called the *Lovely Lady* (posth. 1932), and *The Tales of D.H. Lawrence* (posth. 1934), *The Complete Poems of D.H. Lawrence* were edited by V. de S. Pinto and W. Roberts (1964) and *The Complete Plays* appeared in 1965 (no editor credited). *The Letters of D.H. Lawrence* was edited by Aldous Huxley (1932).

A REVIEW

D.H. Lawrence is known for his explication of sexuality. The sexual relationship between two characters provides him ample artistic tension and he prefers to concentrate generally on two characters — male and female — in his stories. "The Shadow in the Rose Garden" (1914) is one such story in which he manages to convey all emotional tension and beliefs with an immaculate impersonality. The beauty of the story is the portrayal of extremely emotional and nostalgic scenes with such discerning depersonalization. He shows his mastery in maintaining a balance between a strong emotional tension and a down-to-the-earth sense of actuality.

First, there is the depiction of love and hatred. A love transcending all kinds of selfishness. "But she paid no heed to his words, only she attended to him"; "We loved each other and were lovers — we were." And a hatred which had an anguish of necessity: "I mean how long were you carrying on with him"; "I hate your not straightforward questions"; "You mean you had your fling with an army man, and then came to me to marry you...." This situation is gradually developed in the story. In the last part of the story there is disillusionment: "At last he had learned the width of breach between them"; and finally the resolution necessitated by the two characters: "they were both shocked so much, they were impersonal, and no longer hated each other". This is an acute realization of the fact that we as man and woman have to redefine our relationship with intense impersonality and sense of actuality. Otherwise the emotional strains and stresses are so powerful and persistent that they shall drive us mad.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Self-commiseration	self-empathy; self-consolation; self-compassion
Physiognomy	the practice of trying to judge character; and mental qualities by observation of bodily; esp. facial features; face; countenance
Sauntered	stroll; to walk about idly
Yearning	desirous; hopeful
Irked	wearied, annoyed; irritated
Solicitously	concerned; troubled; worried; uneasy; apprehensive; eager
Phlegmatically	sluggish; calm; impassive
Obscurity	not clear or distinct; hidden; ambiguous, shade
Parasol	a light weight umbrella
Irresolutely	unstable; unsettled; vagrant
Coaxed	persuaded by soothing words; to use gentle persuasion
Jutting	obstructive; protruding; projecting; bulging
Scrupulously	cautiously; thoughtfully; carefully
Craving	an intense or prolonged desire
Groped	to feel or search about blindly; to grasp
Lunatic	deranged; insane; eccentric; psychotic
Luminousness	bright; shine; beaming; radiant
Entrails	intestines; inside organs
Disconsolate	heavy; distressed; sad; dejected

Complacency	comfort; apathy; indifference; contentment
Faltered	hesitated; trembled; wavered
Exasperated	irritated; angry; provoked
Ignominy	shame; ridicule; disgrace; indignity
Callously	hardened; heartlessly; coldly; indifferent
Fling	good time; celebration; indulgence
Baiting	inducement; tease; torment
Incredulous	indecisive; puzzled; undetermined

12

A CONVERSATION WITH MY FATHER

Grace Paley

My father is eighty-six years old and in bed. His heart, that bloody motor, is equally old and will not do certain jobs any more. It still floods his head with brainy light, but it won't let his legs carry the weight of his body around the house. Despite my metaphors, this muscle failure is not due to his old heart, he says, but to a potassium shortage. Sitting on one pillow, leaning on three, he offers last-minute advice and makes a request.

"I would like you to write a simple story just once more," he says, "the kind de Maupassant wrote, or Chekhov, the kind you used to write. Just recognizable people and then write down what happened to them next."

I say, "Yes, why not? That's possible," I want to please him, though a story, if he means the kind that begins: "There was a woman..." followed by plot, the absolute line between two points which I've always despised. Not for literary reasons, but because it takes all hope away. Everyone, real or invented, deserves the open destiny of life.

Finally I thought of a story that had been happening for a couple of years right across the street. I wrote it down, then read it aloud. "Pa," I said, "how about this? Do you mean something like this?"

Once in my time there was a woman and she had a son. They lived nicely, in a small apartment in Manhattan. This boy at about fifteen became a junkie, which is not unusual in our neighbourhood. In order to maintain her close friendship with him, she became a junkie too.

She said it was part of the youth culture, with which she felt very much at home. After a while, for a number of reasons, the boy gave it all up and left the city and his mother in disgust. Hopeless and alone, she grieved. We all visit her.

"O.K, Pa, that's it," I said, "an unadorned and miserable tale."

"But that's not what I mean," my father said. "You misunderstood me on purpose. You know there's a lot more to it. You know that. You left everything out. Turgenev wouldn't do that. Chekhov wouldn't do that. There are in fact Russian writers you never heard of, you don't have an inkling of, as good as anyone, who can write a plain ordinary story, who would not leave out what you have left out. I object not to facts but to people sitting in trees senselessly, voices from who knows where....."

"Forget that one, Pa, what have I left out now? In this one?"

"Her looks, for instance."

"Oh. Quite handsome, I think. Yes."

"Her hair?"

"Dark, with heavy braids, as though she were a girl or a foreigner."

"What were her parents like, her stock? That she became such a person. It's interesting, you know."

"From out of town. Professional people. The first to be divorced in their county. How's that? Enough?" I asked.

"With you, it's all a joke," he said. "What about the boy's father? Why didn't you mention him? Who was he? Or was the boy born out of wedlock?"

"Yes," I said. "He was born out of wedlock."

"For God's sake, doesn't any one in your stories get married? Doesn't anyone have the time to run down the City Hall, before they jump into bed?"

"No," I said. "In real life, yes. But in my stories, no."

"Why do you answer me like that?"

"Oh, Pa, this is a simple story about a smart woman who came to N.Y.C. Full of interest, love, trust, excitement, very up to date, and about her son, what hard time she had in this world. Married or not, it's of small consequence."

"It is of great consequence," he said.

"O.K.," I said.

"O.K. O.K. yourself," he said, "but listen. I believe you that she's good-looking, but I don't think she was so smart."

"That's true," I said. Actually that's the trouble with stories. People start out fantastic. You think they're extraordinary, but it turns out as the work goes along, they're just average with a good education. Sometimes the other way around the person's a kind of dumb innocent, but he outwits you and you can't even think of an ending good enough."

"What do you do then?" he asked. He had been a doctor for a couple of decades and then an artist for a couple of decades and he's still interested in details, craft, technique.

"Well, you just have to let the story lie around till some agreement can be reached between you and the stubborn hero."

"Aren't you talking silly, now?" he asked. "Start again," he said. "It so happens I'm not going out this evening. Tell the story again. See what you can do this time."

"O.K.," I said. "But it's not a five-minute job." Second attempt:

Once, across the street from us, there was a fine handsome woman, our neighbor. She had a son whom she loved because she'd known him since birth (in helpless chubby infancy, and in the wrestling, hugging ages, seven to ten, as well as earlier and later). This boy, when he fell into the fist of adolescence, became a junkie. He was not a hopeless one. He was in fact hopeful, an ideologue and successful converter. With his busy brilliance, he wrote persuasive articles for his high-school

newspaper. Seeking a wider audience, using important connections, he drummed into Lower Manhattan newsstand distribution a periodical called *Oh! Golden Horse!*

In order to keep him from feeling guilty (because guilt is the stony heart of nine tenths of all clinically diagnosed cancers in America today, she said), and because she had always believed in giving bad habits room at home where one could keep an eye on them, she too became a junkie. Her kitchen was famous for a while — a center for intellectual addicts who knew what they were doing. A few felt artistic like Coleridge and others were scientific and revolutionary like Leary. Although she was often high herself, certain good mothering reflexes remained, and she saw to it that there was lots of orange juice around any honey and milk and vitamin pills. However, she never cooked anything but chili, and that no more than once a week. She explained, when we talked to her, seriously, with neighborly concern, that it was her part in the youth culture and she would rather be with the young, it was an honor, than with her own generation.

One week, while nodding through an Antonioni film, this boy was severely jabbed by the elbow of a stern and proselytizing girl, sitting beside him. She offered immediate apricots and nuts for his sugar level, spoke to him sharply, and took him home.

She had heard of him and his work and she herself published, edited, and wrote a competitive journal called 'Man Does Live By Bread Alone.' In the organic heat of her continuous presence he could not help but become interested once more in his muscles, his arteries, and nerve connections. In fact he began to love them, treasure them, praise them with funny little songs in "Man Does Live."

the fingers of my flesh transcend

my transcendental soul

the tightness in my shoulders end

my teeth have made me whole

To the mouth of his head (that glory of will and determination) he brought hard apples, nuts, wheat germ, and soybean oil. He said to his old friends, from now on, I guess I'll keep my wits about me. I'm going

on the natch. He said he was about to begin a spiritual deep breathing journey. How about you too, Mom? he asked kindly.

His conversion was so radiant, splendid, that neighborhood kids of his age began to say that he had never been a real addict at all, only a journalist along for the smell of the story. The mother tried several times to give up what had become without her son and his friends a lonely habit. This effort only brought it to supportable levels. The boy and his girls took their electronic mimeograph and moved to the bushy edge of another borough. They were very strict. They said they would not see her again until she had been off drugs for sixty days.

At home alone in the evening, weeping, the mother read and reread the seven issues of *oh: Golden Horse!* They seemed to her as truthful as ever. We often crossed the street to visit and console. But if we mentioned any of our children who were at college or in the hospital or dropouts at home, she would cry out, *My baby! My baby!* and burst into terrible, face-scarring, time consuming tears. *The End.*

First my father was silent, then he said, "Number One: you have a nice sense of humor. Number Two: I see you can't tell a plain story. So don't waste time" Then he said sadly, "Number Three: I suppose that means she was alone, she was left like that, his mother. Alone. Probably sick?" I said, "Yes."

"Poor woman. Poor girl, to be born in a time of fools, to live among fools. The end. The end. You were right to put that down. The end."

I didn't want to argue, but I had to say, "Well, it is not necessarily the end, Pa."

"Yes," he said, "what a tragedy. The end of a person."

"No, Pa." I begged him. "It doesn't have to be. She's only about forty. She could be a hundred different things in this world as time goes on. A teacher or a social worker. An ex-junkie! Sometimes it's better than having a master's in education."

"Jokes," he said. "As a writer that's your main trouble. You don't want to recognize it. Tragedy! Plain tragedy! Historical tragedy! No hope. The end."

"Oh, Pa," I said. "She could change."

"In your own life, too, you have to look it in the face." He took a couple of nitroglycerin. "Turn to five," he said, pointing to the dial on the oxygen tank. He inserted the tubes into his nostrils and breathed deep. He closed his eyes and said, "No."

I had promised the family to always let him have the last word when arguing, but in this case I had a different responsibility. That woman lives across the street. She's my knowledge and my invention. I'm sorry for her. I'm not going to leave her there in that house crying. (Actually neither would Life, which unlike me has no pity.)

Therefore: She did change. Of course her son never came home again. But right now, she's the receptionist in a storefront community clinic in the East Village. Most of the customers are young people, some old friends. The head doctor has said to her, "If we only had three people in this clinic with your experiences...."

"The doctor said that?" My father took the oxygen tubes out of his nostrils and said, "Jokes again."

"No, Pa, it could really happen that way, it's a funny world nowadays."

"No," he said. "Truth first. She will slide back. A person must have character. She does not."

"No, Pa," I said. "That's it. She's got a job. Forget it. She's in that storefront working."

"How long will it be?" he asked. "Tragedy! You too. When will you look it in the face?"

THE AUTHOR

Born in New York, in 1922, she was educated in the same city. She was a member of the Sarah Lawrence Faculty whose stories have been collected in *The Little Disturbances of Man* (1959) and *Enormous Changes at the Last Minute* (1974).

A REVIEW

Grace Paley, in her individualistic way demonstrates the generation gap in "A Conversation with My Father." The way the things were: nice, related, family orientated, articulated; and now the things have changed; unfinished, complex, depressing. The father at the age of eighty-six is nosy, demanding, and somewhat irritating; the author is somewhat obliging but not quite willing to break all the barriers to enter the father's world of the past. She, however, tries to construct a story the way her father wants it, but herself thinks it as "unadorned and miserable tale". She goes on changing it by answering such questions: "Her looks?", "What about her parents?" "What about the boy's father?" But she fails to write a story in the sensibility of her father's times.

Her second attempt is rather longish. She puts in the story all the values she thinks are dear to her father. But her father's remarks: "So don't waste time." The father does not like the end. He demands some hope to stick to, not just the end of everything. What he wants is that "a person must have some character." And finally the difference between the generations that Grace Paley wants to show is: "When will you look it in the face." Evasion, a characteristic of the modern man is resented.

Artistically Paley's construction of the story is superb, and the tone and bearing of it is so light, unassuming and humorous that it is a feast to read it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>An inkling of</i>	a hint; a suggestion; a vague idea
<i>Stubborn</i>	refusing to obey; obstinate
<i>Chubby</i>	round and plump
<i>Ideologue</i>	doctrine
<i>Proselytizing</i>	converting from one religion or opinion to another
<i>Radiant</i>	shining brightly; showing joy
<i>Momeograph</i>	a machine for making copies of matter by means of stencil
<i>Leary</i>	Timolty Leary (b. 1920); American psychologist who promoted the use of psychedelic drugs

13

THE FLY

Katherine Mansfield

"Y'ARE very snug in here," piped old Mr. Woodifield, and he peered out of the great, green leather armchair by his friend, the boss's desk, as a baby peers out of its pram. His talk was over; it was time for him to be off. But he did not want to go. Since he had retired, since his.... stroke, the wife and the girls kept him boxed up in the house every day of the week except Tuesday. On Tuesday he was dressed up and brushed and allowed to cut back to the City for the day. Though what he did there the wife and girls couldn't imagine. Made a nuisance of himself to his friends, they supposed.... Well, perhaps so. All the same, we cling to our last pleasures as the tree clings to its last leaves. So there sat old Woodifield, smoking a cigar and staring almost greedily at the boss, who rolled in his office chair, stout, rosy, five years older than he, and still going strong, still at the helm. It did one good to see him.

Wistfully, admiringly, the old voice added, "It's snug in here, upon my word!"

"Yes, it's comfortable enough," agreed the boss, and he flipped *The Financial Times* with a paper knife. As a matter of fact he was proud of his room; he liked to have it admired, especially by old Woodifield. It gave him a feeling of deep, solid satisfaction to be planted there in the midst of it in full view of that frail old figure in the muffler.

"I've had it done up lately," he explained, as he had explained for the past — how many? — weeks. "New carpet,"

and he pointed to the bright red carpet with a pattern of large white rings. "New furniture," and he nodded towards the massive bookcase and the table with legs like twisted treacle. "Electric heating!" He waved sausages glowing so softly in the tilted copper pan.

But he did not draw old Woodifield's attention to the photograph over the table of a grave-looking boy in uniform standing in one of those spectral photographer's parks with photographers' storm clouds behind him. It was not new. It had been there for over six years.

"There was something I wanted to tell you," said old Woodifield, and his eyes grew dim remembering. "Now what was it? I had it in mind when I started out this morning." His hand began to tremble, and patches of red showed above his beard.

Poor old chap, he's on his last pins, thought the boss. And, feeling kindly he winked at the old man, and said, Jokingly, "I tell you what. I've got a little drop of something here that'll do you good before you go out into the cold again. It's beautiful stuff. It wouldn't hurt a child." He took a key off his watch-chain, unlocked a cupboard below his desk, and drew forth a dark, squat bottle. "That's the medicine," said he. "And the man from whom I got it told me on the strict Q.T. It came from the cellars at Windsor Castle."

Old Woodifield's mouth fell open at the sight. He couldn't have looked more surprised if the boss had produced a rabbit.

"It's whisky, ain't it?" he piped, feebly.

The boss turned the bottle and lovingly showed him the label. Whisky it was.

"D'you know," said he, peering up at the boss wonderingly, "they won't let me touch it at home." and he looked as though he was going to cry.

"Ah, that's where we know a bit more than the ladies," cried the boss, swooping across for two tumblers that stood on

the table with the water bottle, and pouring a generous finger into each. "Drink it down. It'll do you good. And don't put any water with it. It's sacrilege to tamper with stuff like this. Ah!" He tossed off his, pulled out his handkerchief, hastily wiped his moustaches, cocked an eye at old Woodifield, who was rolling his in his chaps.

The old man swallowed, was silent a moment, and then said faintly, "It's nutty!"

But it warmed him; it crept into his chill old brain — he remembered.

"That was it," he said, heaving himself out of his chair. "I thought you'd like to know. The girls were in Belgium last week having a look at poor Reggie's grave, and they happened to come across your boy's. They are quite near each other, it seems."

Old Woodifield paused, but the boss made no reply. Only a quiver of his eyelids showed that he heard.

"The girls were delighted with the way the place is kept," piped the old voice. "Beautifully looked after. Couldn't be better if they were at home. You've not been across, have yer?"

"No, no!" For various reasons the boss had not been across.

"There's miles of it," quavered old Woodifield, "and it's all as neat as a garden. Flowers growing on all the graves. Nice broad paths." It was plain from his voice how much he liked a nice broad path.

"D'you know what the hotel made the girls pay for a pot of jam?" he piped. "Ten francs! Robbery, I call it. It was a little pot, so Gertrude says, no bigger than a half-crown. And she hadn't taken more than a spoonful when they charged her ten francs. Gertrude brought the pot away with her to teach 'em a lesson. Quite right, too; it's trading on our feelings. They think because we're over there having a look around we're ready to pay anything. That's what it is." And he turned towards the door.

"Quite right, quite right!" cried the boss, though what was quite right he hadn't the least idea. He came round by his desk,

followed the shuffling footsteps to the door, and saw the old fellow out. Woodifield was gone.

For a long moment the boss stayed, staring at nothing, while the gray-haired office messenger, watching him, dodged in and out of his cubbyhole like a dog that expects to be taken for a run: "I'll see nobody for half an hour, Macey," said the boss. "Understand? Nobody at all."

"Very good, sir."

The door shut, the firm, heavy steps recrossed the bright carpet, the fat body plumped down in the spring chair, and leaning forward, the boss covered his face with his hands. He wanted, he intended, he had arranged to weep....

It had been a terrible shock to him when old Woodifield sprang that remark upon him about the boy's grave. It was exactly as though the earth had opened and he had seen the boy lying there with Woodifield's girls staring down at him. For it was strange. Although over six years had passed away, the boss never thought of the boy except as lying unchanged, unblemished in his uniform, asleep for ever. "My son!" groaned the boss. But no tears came yet. In the past, in the first months and even years after the boy's death, he had only to say those words to be overcome by such grief that nothing short of a violent fit of weeping could relieve him. Time, he had declared then, he had told everybody, could make no difference. Other men perhaps might recover, might live their loss down, But not he. How was it possible? His boy was an only son. Ever since his birth the boss had worked at building up this business for him. It had no other meaning if it was not for the boy. Life itself had come to have no other meaning. How on earth could he have slaved, denied himself, kept going all these years without the promise for ever before him of the boy's stepping into his shoes and carrying on where he left off?

And that promise had been so near being fulfilled. The boy had been in the office learning the ropes for a year before the war. Every morning they had started off together; they had come back

by the same train. And what congratulations he had received as the boy's father! No wonder; he had taken to it marvelously. As to his popularity with the staff, every man jack of them down to old Macey couldn't make enough of the boy. And he wasn't in the least spoiled. No, he was just his bright, natural self, with the right word for everybody, with that boyish look and his habit of saying, "simply splendid!"

But all that was over and done with as though it never had been. The day had come when Macey had handed him the telegram that brought the whole place crashing about his head. "Deeply regret to inform you....." And he had left the office a broken man, with his life in ruins.

Six years ago, six years..... How quickly time passed! It might have happened yesterday. The boss took his hands from his face; he was puzzled. Something seemed to be wrong with him. He wasn't feeling as he wanted to feel. He decided to get up and have a look at the boy's photograph. But it wasn't a favorite photograph of his; the expression was unnatural. It was cold, even stern-looking. The boy had never looked like that.

At that moment the boss noticed that a fly had fallen into his broken inkpot and was trying feebly but desperately to clamber out again. Help! help! said those struggling legs. But the sides of the inkpot were wet and slippery; it fell back again and began to swim. The boss took up a pen, picked the fly out of the ink, and shook it onto a piece of blotting paper. For a fraction of a second it lay still on the dark patch that oozed round it. Then the front legs waved, took hold, and, pulling its small sodden body up it began the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing, as the stone goes over and under the scythe. Then there was a pause, while the fly, seeming to stand on the tips of its toes, tried to expand first one wing and then the other. It succeeded at last, and, sitting down, it began, like a minute cat, to clean its face. Now one could imagine that the little front legs rubbed against each other lightly, joyfully. The horrible danger was over; it had escaped; it was ready for life again.

But just then the boss had an idea. He plunged his pen back into the ink, leaned his thick wrist on the blotting paper, and as the fly tried its wings down came a great heavy blot. What would it make of that? What indeed! The little beggar seemed absolutely cowed, stunned, and afraid to move because of what would happen next. But then, as if painfully, it dragged itself forward. The front legs waved, caught hold, and, more slowly this time, the task began from the beginning.

"He's a plucky little devil," thought the boss, and he felt a real admiration for the fly's courage. That was the way to tackle things; that was the right spirit. Never say die; it was only a question of..... But the fly had again finished its laborious tasks, and the boss had just time to refill his pen, to shake fair and square on the new-cleaned body yet another dark drop. What about it this time? A painful moment of suspense followed. But behold, the front legs were again waving; the boss felt a rush of relief. He leaned over the fly and said to it tenderly, "You artful little b...." And he actually had the brilliant notion of breathing on it to help the drying process. All the same, there was something timid and weak about its efforts now, and the boss decided that this time should be the last, as he dipped the pen into the inkpot.

It was. The last blot fell on the soaked blotting paper, and the draggled fly lay in it and did not stir. The back legs were stuck to the body; the front legs were not to be seen.

"Come on," said the boss. "Look sharp!" And he stirred it with his pen — in vain. Nothing happened or was likely to happen. The fly was dead.

The boss lifted the corpse on the end of the paper knife and flung it into the waste paper basket, but such a grinding feeling of wretchedness seized him that he felt positively frightened. He started forward and pressed the bell for Macey.

"Bring me some fresh blotting paper," he said, sternly, "and look sharp about it." And while the old dog padded away he fell to wondering what it was he had been thinking about before. What was it? It was He took out his handkerchief and passed it inside his collar. For the life of him he could not remember.

THE AUTHOR

Katherine Mansfield Beauchamp (1888-1923) was the daughter of a successful businessman of Wellington, New Zealand, where she was born. She was sent to London in 1903 to complete her education at Queen's College, where she spent three years. She seems to have led a rather bohemian life: she met, married, and left — on the day of her marriage — George C. Bowden in the space of three weeks.

Katherine Mansfield is generally acknowledged as one of the finest short-story writers of the 20th century, and her work has been discussed by critics in the English-speaking world, France, and Germany ever since her death. The first collection was *In a German Pension* (1911), followed by "Prelude", a story that was published singly in 1918 and marked her use of her own country and childhood the source for some of her best work. 'Je ne parle pas français' (1919) and 'Prelude' were both included in *Bliss and Other Stories* (1920); *The Garden Party*, and *Other Stories* (1922) was the last collection published during her lifetime. Posthumous works were *Poems* edited by J. M. Murry (1923), *Something Childish*, and *Other Stories* (1924) and a *Fairy Story* (Stanford, 1932). Collections were published as *The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield* edited by J. M. Murry (1937), and the *Collected Stories of Katherine Mansfield* (1954), which was an omnibus volume. A selection was edited by D. Davin, (*The World's Classics*, 1953). Murry edited *The Letters of Katherine Mansfield* (1928) and *Katherine Mansfield's Letters to John Middleton Murry 1913-1922* (1951).

A REVIEW

Prof. Robert Wooster Stallman, a respectable critic of 20th century, explains the symbolism¹ of the fly equating it with the Boss, his employees — Macey and Woodifield — and his dead son. The Prof. envisages in the story a conflict between "grief" and "time" in which "time" provides an affecting solace to the victims by winning the conflict against "grief". Willis D. Jacobs calls Prof. Stallman's interpretation of "The Fly" as "ingenious....that the surface theme of the story is the conquest of time over grief". But he thinks Katherine Mansfield herself is symbolic of the fly whose fate is to meet the certain death because of her tuberculosis, an incurable disease of those days as is AIDS of today. She died in 1923.

This is quite an established fact that the story is about the conquest of time over grief. But the story has other dimensions. The Boss kills the fly with wanton and amicable cruelty like the one he shows towards Woodifield by offering him a courteous welcome and liquor to drink without any consideration that the liquor will harm the old man. He himself has realized that the inexorable fate has killed his son and ruined his life.

Everybody in the story is the fly. As Thomas A Bledsoe says, the whole story explicates only one theme: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; they kill us for their sport." Katherine Mansfield has been killed like the fly, with indifference and wantonness by the destiny acting like the Boss of the story. There is simply no escape. Everybody has to accept the formidability of life in the shape of death. We are the fly. The boss in the story like destiny is benevolently cruel. The symbolism of *The Fly* is elaborate — "Within the framework of a beautifully planned story, it proclaims the final selfishness of living."

¹ For symbolism see page 109.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

Snug	comfortable; secure; cozy; protected from the weather
Peered	to appear; to show slightly; come partly into sight; to peep
Cling	to stick; to adhere; to be emotionally attached
Helm	control; guide
Stout	strong; sturdy; powerful
Treacle	molasses
Exultantly	jubilantly; triumphantly
Spectral	supernatural; ghostly; mysterious; otherwordly
Squat	spread out; broad
Sacrilege	profanation; blasphemy; violation of something sacred
Tamper	meddle; to make illegal arrangements with
Quiver	to shake; tremble
Oozed	to flow or leak out slowly as through pores; seep; to give forth moisture as through pores
Unblemished	perfect; unvarnished; pure; faultless
Sodden	wet; filled with moisture; damp; soggy
Scythe	a tool with a single-edged blade set at an angle on a long handle
Wretchedness	misery; anguish; torment
Draggled	to make wet dirty by dragging in mud

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A PASSION IN THE DESERT

Honore De Balzac

"That show is dreadful," she cried, coming out of the menagerie of M. Martin. She had just been looking at that daring speculator "working with his hyena" — to speak in the style of the program.

"By what means," she continued, "can he have tamed these animals to such a point as to be certain of their affection for —."

"What seems to you a problem," said I, interrupting, "is really quite natural."

"Oh!" she cried, letting an incredulous smile wander over her lips.

"You think that beasts are wholly deprived of passion?" I asked her, "Quite the reverse; we may attribute to them all the vices arising in our own state of civilization."

She looked at me with an air of astonishment.

"Nevertheless," I continued, "the first time I saw M. Martin, I admit, that I like you, did give an exclamation of surprise. I found myself next to an old soldier whose right leg was amputated, who had come in with me. His face had struck me. He had one of those fearless heads, stamped with the seal of warfare, and on which the battles of Napoleon are written. He had that frank good-humored expression which always impresses me favorably. He was without doubt one of those troopers who are surprised at nothing, who find matter for

laughter in the contortions of a dying comrade, who bury or plunder him quite light-heartedly, who stand without flinching in the way of bullets, in fact, one of those men who waste no time in deliberation, and would not hesitate to make friends with the devil himself. After looking very attentively at the proprietor of the menagerie getting out of his box, my companion pursed up his lips with an air of mockery and contempt, with that peculiar and expressive twist which superior people assume to show that they are not to be taken in. Then when I was expatiating on the courage of M. Martin, he smiled, shook his head knowingly, and said, "That's an old story."

"What do you mean 'an old story?'" I said. "If you would explain to me the mystery, I should be very obliged."

"After a few minutes, during which we got to know each other, we went to dine at the first *restaurateur's* whose shop caught our eye. At desert a bottle of champagne completely refreshed and brightened up the memories of this odd old soldier. He told me his story, and I saw he had every reason to exclaim, 'That's an old story!'"

When she got home, she teased me to such an extent and made so many promises, that I consented to write up for her the old soldier's confidences. Next day she received the following episode of an epic which might be entitled: "The French in Egypt."

During the expedition in Upper Egypt under General Desaix, a Provençal soldier fell into the hands of the Moors, and was taken by these Arabs into the deserts beyond the falls of the Nile.

In order to place a comfortable distance between themselves and the French army, the Moors made forced marches, and stopped only at night. They camped round a well hidden by palm trees under which they had previously concealed a store of provisions. Never thinking that the notion of flight would occur to their prisoner, they contented themselves with

binding his hands, and after eating a few dates, and giving provender to their horses, they went to sleep.

When the brave Provencal saw that his enemies were no longer watching him, he made use of his teeth to steal a scimitar, fixed the blade between his knees, and cut the cords which prevented use of his hands; in a moment he was free. He at once seized a rifle and a dagger, then taking the precaution to provide himself with a supply of dried dates, barley, and powder and shot, he fastened a scimitar to his waist, leaped onto a horse, and spurred on vigorously in the direction where he thought to find the French army. Being impatient to see a bivouac again, he pressed on the already tired horse at such speed that at last the poor animal died, its flanks lacerated, leaving the Frenchman alone in the desert.

After walking some time in the sand with all the courage of an escaping convict, the soldier was obliged to stop, as the day had already ended. In spite of the beauty of an oriental sky at night, he felt he had not strength enough to go on. Fortunately he had been able to find a small hill, on the summit of which a few palm trees shot up into the air; it was their verdure seen from afar which had brought hope and consolation to his heart. His fatigue was so great that he lay down upon a rock of granite, cut out by a whim of nature like a camp-bed; there he fell asleep without taking any precaution to defend himself while he slept. He had made the sacrifice of his life. His last thought was one of regret. He repented having left the Moors, whose nomad life seemed agreeable to him now that he was far from them and without help. He was awakened by the sun, whose pitiless rays fell straight down on the granite and produced an intolerable heat — for he had the stupidity to place himself inversely to the shadow thrown by the green and majestic heads of the palm trees. He looked at the solitary trees and shuddered — they reminded him of the graceful shafts crowned with foliage which characterize the Saracen columns in the cathedral of Arles.

But when, after counting the palm trees, he cast his eye around him, the most horrible despair swooped down upon his

soul. Before him stretched an ocean without limit. The dark sand of the desert spread farther than sight could reach in every direction, and glittered like a sword-blade of steel struck with a bright light. It might have been a sea of looking-glass, or lakes melted together like a mirror. A fiery vapor rising in sheets made a perpetual whirlwind over the quivering land. The sky was lighted with an oriental splendor of hopeless purity, leaving naught for the imagination to desire. Heaven and earth were on fire.

The silence was awful in its wild and terrible majesty. Infinity, immensity, closed in upon the soul from every side. Not a cloud in the sky, not a breath in the air, not a break in the bosom of the sand, ever moving in diminutive waves; the horizon ended as at sea on a clear day, with one line of light, as clear as the cut of a sword.

The Provençal threw his arms around the trunk of one of the palm trees, as though it were the body of a friend, and then in the shelter of the thin straight shadow that the palm cast upon the granite, he wept. Then sitting down he remained as he was, contemplating with profound sadness the implacable scene, which was all he had to look upon. He cried aloud, to measure the solitude. His voice, lost in the hollows of the hill, sounded faintly, and aroused no echo — the echo was in his own heart. The Provençal was twenty-two years old — he loaded his carbine.

"There'll be time enough," he said to himself, laying on the ground the weapon which alone could bring him deliverance.

Looking by turns at the black expanse and the blue expanse, the soldier dreamed of France — he smelt with delight the gutters of Paris — he remembered the towns through which he has passed, the faces of his fellow-soldiers, the most minute details of his life. In his southern fancy he caught a glimpse of the stones of his beloved Provence in the play of the heat which waved over the spread sheet of the desert. Fearing the danger of this cruel mirage, he went down the side of the hill opposite to that by which he had come up the day before. His joy was great

when he discovered a sort of grotto carved by nature into the immense fragments of granite which made up the base of the hill. The remains of a rug showed that this place of refuge had at one time been inhabited; at a short distance he saw some palm trees full of dates. Then the instinct which binds us to life awoke again in his heart. He hoped to live long enough to await the passing of some Arabs, or perhaps he might hear the sound of cannon; for at this time Bonaparte was traversing Egypt.

This thought gave him new life. The palm trees seemed to bend with the weight of the ripe fruit. He shook some of it down. When he tasted this unlooked-for — for manna, he felt sure that the palms had been cultivated by a former inhabitant — the savory, fresh meat of the dates was proof of the care of his predecessor. He passed suddenly from dark despair to an almost insane joy. He went up again to the top of the hill, and spent the rest of the day in cutting down one of the sterile palm trees, which the night before had served him for shelter. A vague memory made him think of the animals of the desert; and in case they might come to drink at the spring, visible from the base of the rocks but lost farther down, he resolved to guard himself from their visits by placing a barrier at the entrance of his hermitage.

In spite of his diligence, and the strength which the fear of being devoured asleep gave him, he was unable to cut the palm in pieces, though he succeeded in cutting it down. When at eventide the king of the desert fell, the sound of its fall resounded far and wide, like a moan in the solitude; the soldier shuddered as though he had heard some voice predicting woe.

But like an heir who does not long bewail a deceased parent, he tore off from this beautiful tree the tall broad green leaves which are its poetic adornment, and used them to mend the mat on which he was to sleep.

Fatigued by the heat and his work, he fell asleep under the red curtains of his wet cave. In the middle of the night his sleep was troubled by an extra-ordinary noise. He sat up, and the deep silence around him allowed him to distinguish the alternative

accents of a breathing whose savage energy could not belong to a human creature.

A profound terror, increased still further by the darkness, the silence, and his waking image, froze his heart within him. He felt his hair almost stand on end, when by straining his eyes to their utmost he perceived through the shadows two faint yellow lights. At first he attributed these lights to the reflection of his own pupils, but soon the vivid brilliance of the night aided him gradually to distinguish the objects around him in the cave, and he beheld a huge animal lying but two steps from him. Was it a lion, a tiger, or a crocodile?

The Provençal was not educated enough to know to what species his enemy belonged; but his fright was all the greater as his ignorance led him to imagine all terrors at once. He endured a cruel torture, noting every variation of the breathing close to him without daring to make the slightest movement. An odor, pungent like that of a fox, but more penetrating, profounder — so to speak — filled the cave; and when the Provençal became aware of this, his terror reached its height, for he could no longer doubt the proximity of a terrible companion, whose royal dwelling served him for shelter.

Presently the reflection of the moon, descending on the horizon, lit up the den, rendering gradually visible and resplendent the spotted skin of a panther.

The lion of Egypt slept, curled up like a big dog, the peaceful possessor of a sumptuous niche at the gate of a hotel; its eyes opened for a moment and closed again; its face was turned toward the man. A thousand confused thoughts passed through the mind of the panther's prisoner; first the thought of killing it with a bullet from his gun, but he saw there was not enough distance between them for him to take proper aim — the barrel of the gun extended beyond the animal. And if it were to wake! — the thought made his limbs rigid. He listened to his own heart beating in the midst of the silence, and cursed the too violent pulsations which the flow of blood brought on, fearing to disturb

that sleep which allowed him time to think to some means of escape.

Twice he placed his hand on his scimitar, intending to cut off the head of his enemy; but the difficulty of cutting the stiff, short hair compelled him to abandon this daring project. To miss would be to die for certain, he thought; he preferred the chances of fair fight, and made up his mind to wait till morning, which was not far off.

The Frenchman could now examine the panther at ease; its muzzle was smeared with blood.

'She's had a good dinner,' he thought, without troubling himself as to whether her feast might have been on human flesh. "She won't be hungry when she gets up."

It was a female. The fur on her belly and flanks was glistening white; many small marks like velvet formed beautiful bracelets round her feet; her sinuous tail was also white, ending with black rings; the overpart of her dress, yellow like old gold, very sleek and soft, had the characteristic blotches shading off from the center like roses, which distinguish the panther from every other feline species.

This tranquil and formidable hostess snored in an attitude as graceful as that of a cat lying on the cushion of an ottoman. Her bloodstained paws, nervous and well-armed, were stretched out before her face, which rested upon them, and from which radiated her straight, slender whiskers, like threads of silver.

If she had been like that in a cage, the Provencal would doubtless have admired the grace of the animal, and the vigorous contrasts of vivid color which gave her robe an imperial splendor; but just then his sight was troubled by her sinister appearance. The presence of the panther, even asleep, could not fail to produce the effect which the magnetic eyes of the serpent are said to have on the nightingale.

For a moment the courage of the soldier began to fail before this danger, though no doubt it would have risen at the mouth of a cannon vomiting forth grapeshot. Nevertheless, a

bold thought brought daylight to his soul and dried up the source of the cold sweat which sprang forth on his brow. Like men who, driven to bay by misfortune, defy death and offer their body to its blows, so he, seeing in this merely a tragic episode, resolved to play his part with honor to the last.

"The day before yesterday the Arabs would have killed me perhaps," he said. So considering himself as good as dead already, he waited bravely, with excited curiosity, for his enemy's awakening.

When the sun appeared, the panther suddenly opened her eyes; then she put out her paws with energy, as if to stretch them and get rid of cramp. At last she yawned, showing the formidable apparatus of her teeth and forked tongue, rough as a file.

"A regular coquette," thought the Frenchman, seeing her roll herself about so softly and kittenishly. She licked off the blood which stained her paws and muzzle, and scratched her head with reiterated gestures full of prettiness, "All right, make yourself pretty," the Frenchman said to himself, beginning to recover his gaiety with his courage; "We'll say good morning to each other presently," and he seized the small, short dagger which he had taken from the Moors.

At this moment the panther turned her head toward the man and looked at him fixedly without moving. The rigidity of the metallic eyes and their insupportable luster made him shudder, especially when the animal walked toward him. But he looked at her caressingly, staring into her eyes in order to magnetize her; and let her come quite close to him; then with a movement both gentle and amorous, as though he were caressing the most beautiful of women, he passed his hand over her whole body, from the head to the tail, scratching the flexible vertebrae which divided the panther's yellow back. The animal waved her tail voluptuously, and her eyes grew gentle; and when for the third time the Frenchman accomplished this flattery in which there was a purpose, she gave forth one of those purrings by which our cats express their pleasure; but this murmur issued from a throat so powerful and so deep, that it resounded through

the cave, like the last vibrations of an organ in a church. The man, understanding the importance of his caresses, redoubled them in such a way as to surprise and stupefy his imperious courtesan. When he felt sure of having extinguished the ferocity of his capricious companion, whose hunger had so fortunately been satisfied the day before, he got up to go out the cave; the panther let him go out, but when he had reached the summit of the hill she sprang with the lightness of a sparrow hopping from twig to twig, and rubbed herself against his legs, arching her back after the manner of all the race of cats. Then regarding her guest with eyes whose glare had softened a little, she gave vent to that wild cry which naturalists compare to the grating of a saw.

"She is exacting," said the Frenchman, smilingly.

He was bold enough to play with her ears; he caressed her belly and scratched her head as hard as he could. When he saw that he was successful, he tickled her skull with the point of his dagger, watching for the right moment to kill her, but the hardness of her bones made him tremble for his success.

The sultana of the desert graciously manifested her acceptance of the attentions of her slave by lifting her head, stretching out her neck, and showing her delight by the tranquility of her attitude. It suddenly occurred to the soldier that to kill this savage princess with one blow he must poignard her in the throat.

He was raising the blade, when the panther, satisfied no doubt, laid herself gracefully at his feet, and cast up at him glances in which, in spite of their natural fierceness, was mingled confusedly a kink of good-will. The poor Provencal ate his dates, leaning against one of the palm trees, and casting his eyes alternately on the desert in quest of some liberator and on his terrible companion to watch her uncertain clemency.

The panther watched the place where the date stones fell, and every time that he threw one down her eyes expressed an incredible mistrust. She examined the man with an almost commercial prudence. However, this examination was favorable

to him, for when he had finished his meager meal she licked his boots with her powerful rough tongue, brushing off with marvelous skill the dust gathered in the creases.

"Ah, but when she's really hungry!" thought the Frenchman. In spite of the shudder this thought caused him, the soldier began to measure curiously the proportions of the panther, certainly one of the most splendid specimens of its race. She was three feet high and four feet long without counting her tail. The powerful weapon, rounded like a cudgel, was nearly three feet long. Her head, large as that of a lioness, was distinguished by a rare expression of refinement. The old cruelty of a tiger was dominant, it was true, but here was also a vague resemblance to the face of a coquettish woman. Indeed, the face of this solitary queen had something of the gaiety of a drunken Nero: she had satiated herself with blood, and she wanted to play.

The soldier tried to walk up and down; the panther left him free, contenting herself with following him with her eyes, less like a faithful dog than a big Angora cat, disturbed at everything, even at the movements of her master.

When he looked around, he saw, by the spring, the remains of his horse; the panther had dragged the carcass all that way. About two-thirds of it had been devoured already. The sight reassured him.

It was easy then to explain the panther's absence, and the respect she had for him while he slept. This first piece of good luck emboldened him to try the future, and he conceived the wild hope of continuing on good terms with the panther during the entire day, neglecting no means of taming her, and of winning her good graces.

He returned to her, and had the indescribable joy of seeing her wag her tail with an almost imperceptible movement at his approach. He sat down then, without fear, by her side, and they began to play together; he took her paws and muzzle, played with her ears, rolled her over on her back, stroke her warm, silky

flanks. She let him do whatever he liked, and when he began to stroke the hair on her feet she drew her claws in carefully.

The Frenchman, keeping one hand on his dagger, was still thinking about plunging it into the belly of the too-confiding panther, but he was afraid that he would be immediately strangled in her last conclusive struggle. Besides, he felt in his heart of sort of remorse which bade him respect a creature that had done him no harm. He seemed to have found a friend, in a boundless desert. Half unconsciously he thought of his first sweetheart, whom he had nicknamed "Mignonne" by way of contrast, because she was so atrociously jealous that all the time of their love he was in fear of the knife with which she had always threatened him.

This memory of his early days suggested to him the idea of making the young panther answer to this name, now that he began to admire with less terror her swiftness, suppleness, and softness. Toward the end of the day he had familiarized himself with his perilous position; he now almost liked the painfulness of it. At last his companion had got into the habit of looking up at him whenever he cried in a falsetto voice, "Mignonne."

At the setting of the sun Mignonne gave, several times running, a profound melancholy cry. "She's been well brought up," said the light-hearted soldier; "she says her prayers." But this mental joke only occurred to him when he noticed what a pacific attitude his companion remained in. "Come, *ma petite blonde*, I'll let you go to bed first," he said to her, counting on the activity of his own legs to run away as quickly as possible, directly she was asleep, and seek another shelter for the night.

The soldier waited with impatience the hour of his flight, and when it had arrived he walked vigorously in the direction of the Nile; but hardly had he done a quarter of a league in the sand when he heard the panther bounding after him, crying with that saw-like cry more dreadful even than the sound of her leaping.

"Ah!" he said, "Then she's taken fancy to me; she has never met any one before, and it is really quite flattering to have her

first love." That instant the man fell into one of those movable quicksands so terrible to travellers and from which it is impossible to save oneself. Feeling himself caught, he gave a shriek of alarm; the panther seized him with her teeth by the collar, and, springing vigorously backward, drew him as if by magic out of the whirling sand.

"Ah, Mignonne!" cried the soldier, caressing her enthusiastically; "we're bound together for life and death — but no jokes, mind!" and he retraced his steps.

From that time the desert seemed inhabited. It contained a being to whom the Frenchman could talk, and whose ferocity was rendered gentle by him, though he could not explain to himself the reason for their strange friendship. Great as was the soldier's desire to stay upon guard, he slept.

On awakening he could not find Mignonne; he mounted the hill, and in the distance saw her springing towards him after the habit of these animals, who cannot run on account of the extreme flexibility of the vertebral column. Mignonne arrived, her jaws covered with blood; she received the wonted caress of her companion, showing with much purring how happy it made her. Her eyes, full of languor, turned still more gently than the day before toward the Provincial who talked to her as one would to a tame animal.

"Ah! Mademoiselle, you are a nice girl, aren't you? Just look at that! so we like to be made much of, don't we? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? So you have been eating some Arab or other, have you? that doesn't matter; but don't you take to eating Frenchman, or I shan't like you any longer."

She played like a dog with its master, letting herself be rolled over, knocked about, and stroked, alternately; sometimes she herself would provoke the soldier, putting up her paw with a soliciting gesture.

Some days passed in this manner. This companionship permitted the Provencal to appreciate the sublime beauty of the desert; now that he had a living thing to think about, alternations

of fear and quiet, and plenty to eat, his mind became filled with contrast and his life began to be diversified.

Solitude revealed to him all her secrets, and enveloped him in her delights. He discovered in the rising and setting of the sun sights unknown to the world. He knew what it was to tremble when he heard over his head the hiss of a bird's wing, so rarely did they pass, or when he saw the changing clouds, many-colored travellers, one melting into another. He studied in the night time the effect of the moon upon the ocean of sand, where the simoon made waves swift of movement and rapid in their change. He lived the life of the Eastern day, marvelling at its wonderful pomp; then after having revelled in the sight of a hurricane over the plain where the whirling sands made red, dry mists and death bearing clouds, he would welcome the night with joy, for then fell the healthful freshness of the stars, and he listened to imaginary music in the skies. Then solitude taught him to unroll the treasures of dreams. He passed whole hours in remembering mere nothings and comparing his present life to his past.

At last he grew passionately fond of the panther; for some sort of affection was a necessity. Whether it was that his will powerfully projected had modified the character of his companion, or whether, because she found abundant food in her predatory excursions in the desert, she respected the man's life, he began to fear for it no longer, seeing her so well tamed.

He devoted the greater part of his time to sleep, but he was obliged to watch like a spider in its web that the moment of his deliverance might not escape him, if any one should pass the line marked by the horizon. He had sacrificed his shirt to make a flag with, which he hung at the top of a palm tree, whose foliage he had torn off. Taught by necessity, he found the means of keeping it spread out, by fastening it with little sticks; for the wind might not be blowing at the moment when the passing traveller was looking through the desert.

It was during the long hours when he had

learn the different inflections of her voice, the expressions of her eyes; he had studied the capricious patterns of all the rosettes which marked the gold of her robe. Mignonne was not even angry when he took hold of the tuft at the end of her tail to count her rings, those graceful ornaments which glittered in the sun like precious stones. It gave him pleasure to contemplate the supple, fine outlines of her form, the whiteness of her belly, the graceful pose of her head. But it was especially when she was playing that he felt most pleasure in looking at her; the agility and youthful lightness of her movements were a continual surprise to him; he wondered at the supple way in which she jumped and climbed, washed herself and arranged her fur, crouched down and prepared to spring. However rapid her spring might be, however slippery the stone she was on, she would always stop short at the word "Mignonne."

One day, in a bright mid-day sun, an enormous bird hovered above in the air. The man left his panther to look at his new guest; but after waiting a moment the deserted sultana growled deeply.

"My goodness! I do believe she's jealous," he cried, seeing her eyes become hard again; "the soul of Virginie must have passed into her body."

The eagle disappeared into the air, while the soldier admired the curved contour of the panther.

But there was such youth and grace in her form! she was beautiful as a woman! The blond fur of her robe mingled well with the delicate tints of dull white which marked her flanks.

The profuse light cast down by the sun made this living gold, these russet markings, to burn in a way to give them an indefinable attraction.

The man and the panther looked at one another with a look full of meaning; the coquette quivered when she felt her friend stroke her head; her eyes flashed like lightning — then she shut them tightly.

"She has a soul," he said, looking at the stillness of this queen of the sands, golden like them, while like them, solitary and burning like them.

"Well," she said, "I have read your plea in favor of beasts; but how did two so well adapted to understand each other end?"

"Ah, well you see, they ended as all great passions do end — by a misunderstanding. For some reason one suspects the other of treason; because of pride they don't come to an explanation. They quarrel and part from sheer obstinacy."

"Yet sometimes at the best moments a single word or a look is enough — but anyhow go on with your story."

"It's horribly difficult, but you will understand, after what the old villain told me over his champagne. He said — 'I don't know if I hurt her, but she turned round, as if enraged, and with her sharp teeth caught hold of my leg — gently, I daresay: but I, thinking she would devour me, plunged my dagger into her throat. She rolled over, giving a cry that froze my heart; and I saw her dying, still looking at me without anger. I would have given all the world — my Legion of Honor cross even, which I had not got then — to have brought her to life again. It was as though I had murdered a real person. And the soldiers who had seen my flag, and had come to my assistance, found me in tears. 'Well sir,' he said, after a moment of silence, 'since then I have been in war in Germany, in Spain, in Russia, in France; I've certainly carried my carcass about a good deal, but never have I seen anything like the desert. Ah! yes, it is very beautiful!'

"What did you feel there?" "I asked him.

"Oh! that can't be described, young man. Besides, I am not always regretting my palm trees and my panther. I should have to be very melancholy for that. In the desert, you see, there is everything, and nothing."

"Yes, but explain"

"Well," he said, with an impatient gesture, "it is God without mankind."

THE AUTHOR

Honore De Balzac, French novelist, born at Tours in 1799, died in Paris 1850. Educated at Vendome and intended for the law, he worked in a legal office from 1816-19. An unfortunate venture as printer-publisher ended in bankruptcy two years later. He began writing adventure stories anonymously, then in 1833, after the publication of *Le Medecin de Campagne*, he had the idea for the *Comedie Humaine*. The greater part of the novels and other studies that went to make up this tremendous panorama of French life were written between this time and 1845. Nevertheless, in 1848 and 1849 he failed to achieve election of the French Academy. Later, when Stendhal and Flaubert came to be regarded as the representative French novelists, Balzac was consistently depreciated and undervalued. But though his work, often written in such a hurry, is unequal and he has obvious faults of manner and style, Balzac by reason of his sheer creative force and his large grasp on life cannot be denied his original reputation as a great novelist, a genuine master, though fundamentally a Romantic and not a realist, as he was once thought to be.

A REVIEW

"*A Passion in the Desert*" (1830) is classified as a military story. It may be a fantasy, an animal story or a symbolic story in which two of God's creatures come so near to each other that, apparently discordant, their natural emotions are described for each other. The story, nonetheless, gives a credible picture of the grotesque, odd, and extravagant account of the cognizable emotions of the two discordant creatures. However, these days the animal lovers have discovered a soft and caring attitude in animals towards the human being. This story perhaps spells out that connection. Anyway, the ferocity of a very dangerous and awe-inspiring animal is humanized.

There is some controversy as to the origin of this story. Madame Surville says that the story was suggested by Martin, the famous trainer of animals. The friendship of animals, especially of lions, with human beings, fascinated Balzac and he has written quite some times about it. On the other hand, Ratier, the editor of *La Silhouette*, claims that it was he who gave Balzac the idea of writing such a fantastical story. It is more than probable that both sources are involved.

The story however, is an episode from a project novel *Les Français en Egypte*. Obviously the novel was intended to depict the French military adventurism in Egypt, but was left unfinished. Balzac put the story temporarily in the *Etude Philosophiques*. In 1864, however, this tale, the experience of a soldier during the French campaign in Egypt, rightfully took its place in the limited group of military stories.

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Menagerie</i>	a collection of wild animals; a place where such animals are kept
<i>Hyena</i>	a beast with powerful jaws
<i>Incredulous</i>	unwilling to believe; doubting
<i>Deliberation</i>	well-considered and thoughtful discussions and decisions
<i>Provencal</i>	a native of S.E. France
<i>Pronender</i>	dry food for livestock as hay; corn etc; fodder
<i>Scimitar</i>	a short; curved sword
<i>Bivouac</i>	a temporary encampment in the open
<i>Flanks</i>	the fleshy rides of a person or animal
<i>Lacerated</i>	mangled; torn; tattered
<i>Fiery</i>	consisting of fire
<i>Quivering</i>	lively; to shake with a tremulous motion
<i>Implacable</i>	that cannot be pacified
<i>Mirage</i>	an optical illusion
<i>Grotto</i>	a cave
<i>Vivid brilliance</i>	clear and lively intelligence or brightness
<i>Pungent</i>	sharply penetrating
<i>Proximity</i>	nearness in space; time etc.
<i>Resplendent</i>	shining brightly
<i>Sumptuous</i>	costly; lavish
<i>Liche</i>	a place or position particularly suitable to a person
<i>Feline species</i>	species of cat

<i>Vibration of organ</i>	rapid rhythmic movements from a musical instrument
<i>Imperious courtesan</i>	arrogant mistress
<i>Ferocity</i>	wild force; cruelty
<i>Capricious</i>	tending to change abruptly; erratic
<i>Atrocious</i>	with cruelty
<i>Soliciting gesture</i>	pleading or appealing gesture

15

THE LITTLE WILLOW

Frances Towers

THE first evening, Simon Byrne was brought to the house by a friend of Charlotte's, one of those with whom she would have to settle an account after the war — unless, of course, he didn't come back. The stranger stood on the threshold and took in the room, and a look of such extraordinary delight came over his face that the youngest Miss Avery's heart gave a little leap, almost as if, independently of her mind and will, it greeted of its own accord another of its kind.

It was, of course, a peculiarly gracious room, with its high ceiling and Adam chimney-piece. The shiny white walls were painted with light and dim reflections of colours, and a thick black hearthrug smudged with curly pink roses — an incongruous Balkan peasant rug in that chaste room — somehow struck a note of innocence and gaiety, like the scherzo in a symphony. That rug, and the photographs on the lid of the grand piano; the untidy stack of books on a table; and a smoky pseudo old master over the fireplace, with the lily of the Annunciation as a highlight, a pale question mark in the gloom, gave the room an oddly dramatic quality. Lisby had often thought — 'It is like a room on the stage in which the story of three sisters is about to unfold.'

The passing reflections of Charlotte in red, Brenda in green made a faint shimmer on the walls as they drifted about, as if a herbaceous border were reflected momentarily in water.

'Charlotte dear, I've brought a friend. He was at Tobruk. Comes from South Africa, and doesn't know a soul over here,' said Stephen Elyot. 'He's just out of hospital.'

'I am so glad!' said Charlotte glowingly, giving him both her hands. 'You must come as often as you like.'

His eyes dwelt on her dark, lovely face, and he said, 'You don't know what it feels like to be on a drawing-room again.'

'I can very well imagine. It must feel like the peace of God,' said Brenda, in that soft, plangent voice of hers, which was so perfect an instrument for the inspired remarks that seemed to fall effortlessly from her lips.

She could say the most divinely right things without a throb of real sympathy, and would spend pounds on roses rather than write a letter of condolence. As for her 'cello playing, it was strange how deeply she could move one, while she herself remained quite aloof. It was because she knew what the music was meant to say and was thinking about the music all the time, and not of how she played or how she felt. It was a great charm in her.

Lisby said nothing. She had no poetic conception of herself to impose on the minds of others. However, she had her uses. She cut the sandwiches and made the coffee and threw herself into the breach when some unassuming guests seemed in danger of being neglected. And unassuming guest often were. Charlotte and Brenda had such brilliant friends — musicians and artists and writers. The truest thing about those girls was that they were charmers. Every other fact sank into insignificance beside that one supreme quality. Though each had her own strongly marked individuality, they had this in common: that by lamplight they acquired, in their trailing dresses, a timeless look, as if they might have stood for types of the seductive woman in any age. Not a modern girl; but the delicate creature who through the ages has been man's rose of beauty, or his cup of hemlock.

Always, destroying friendship, there was this allure — the glow, the fragrance, the what-you-will, which, sooner or later,

ensnared every young man and made him the captive of one or the other of the two elder Misses Avery.

'Charlotte dear,' said Stephen Elyot, wandering about the room with his coffee cup in his hand, 'I wonder, with your exquisite taste, you let that picture hang there! It's all wrong, my dear, as I've told you before. A Watteau, now, or a Fragonard, for this eighteenth-century room. And yet your decors for the stage are so perfect! You are quite my favourite designer.'

'Lisby would die if we banished the picture. It's been in the family for generations,' said Charlotte.

'It has been loved by people who are dead, for its... holiness, not for aesthetic reasons; and that makes it spiritually precious,' said Simon Byrne in a low voice to Lisby, by whom he chanced to be sitting.

She gave a little start. The thick white paint of the lily, and its golden tongue, had fascinated her as a child, making all lilies seem not quite earthly flowers. How did he know so quickly that the dark picture in the white room brought spiritual values into it, brought her mother saying, 'Yes, darling; perhaps the angel has a queer face — perhaps he is a little bit like Miss Nettleton. How interesting that someone we know should have a face that an old master chose for the Angel Gabriel! I shall always think of Miss Nettleton as a very special kind of person.'

'It almost seems as if he might be my kind of person,' she thought. Perhaps one would have thought his face unremarkable if one had not caught that look on it. 'He has known horror and violence, and is terribly vulnerable to beauty,' she had said to herself, with one of her flashes of insight.

Brenda played that evening, and Simon Byrne never took his eyes off her. In her long green dress, with her gold hair like an inverted sheaf of corn, she held him spellbound. Or perhaps it was the music.

When she went to bed that night, Lisby caught herself hoping quite desperately that it was, after all, the music; and for

such a foolish reason. Because as he was leaving, he took her little willow tree in his long thin hands.

'So cool,' he said, 'and watery. Willows and water — I used to dream of them.'

'In the desert?' she asked.

'When I was lost,' he said, 'and parched with thirst, and terribly frightened.'

'It's the loveliest thing I have,' she said.

It was made of jade and crystal and it stood on the lacquer cabinet in the hall. She had fallen in love with it in an antique shop and had expended on it, with wild extravagance, her first term's salary as a teacher. Charlotte and Brenda had thought her too utterly feckless — almost wicked. The sun by day and the moon by night made it throw a lovely shadow on the wall. She couldn't explain that what she loved was the idea of a willow that had been in the mind of the Chinese artist — the glitter and coolness and bewitchment. But he would know.

He came several times. 'Naturally,' thought Lisby, 'one would like the house, wouldn't one? Its oldness and peace.' And Charlotte arranged the flowers so beautifully and there were music and conversation: Brenda and Charlotte's friends talking of art. Anyone could come to the Court House as a place in which to forget the war. There was the strangeness of its being so near London and yet completely hidden in a wood, an oasis in the desert of ribbon development that had spread around it in the past few years. Many young men on leave found it a place of refuge.

He was a person one could talk to. The things that made Lisby laugh made him laugh too. Sometimes he would catch her eye and they would go off into a silent fit of laughter at some absurd thing that no one else had remarked. She knew, once or twice, the strange feeling or strings being plucked in her mind by a chance word or gesture of his, and he had a way of humming some tune that had been haunting her, even something she had

not heard for a long time: a phrase from a symphony, perhaps, that had suddenly come back to her quite distinctly between sleeping and waking, as if a record had been put on in her mind.

And then, one day, Brenda, in her delicate way, appropriated his friendship. A person versed in Brenda-ish modes of behaviour could guess what she thought. When she said charming things a little frostily, as if offering an ice-chilled gardenia, when she smiled with dazzling sweetness one moment and raised her eyebrows rather coldly the next, one knew what was in her mind. She was dealing with a situation that required delicacy and tact. Love was sacred, even unwanted love. The little flame must not be allowed to go out. So one blew on it prettily one moment, and damped it down the next. For a conflagration meant the end of everything, it meant stamping on the heart in which it burned. And how, in wartime, could one bear to do that?

She said, 'You know, Simon is rather an intriguing person. He can say rather divine things — when one is alone with him. Still waters, my dear, run deep.'

Yes. He wouldn't wear his heart on his sleeve. But to be the person to whom he said 'rather divine things' must be to feel oneself unimaginably exquisite.

There was that night they all went out into the garden when the all clear sounded. The scent of the tobacco plants was so sweet it was like a presence, like a naked nymph following one about, and the moon was so bright that the red roses kept their colour, and the white were luminous like the moths. Standing apart, Lisby was fascinated by his shadow lying clearcut on the lawn. She stared at it, and then, looking up, saw it printed, gigantic, across the sky. It gave her a queer cold feeling, seeming to confirm an idea she had of him lately: that everything he was concerned in here and now was the beginning of something that would go on happening outside this sphere. It would always be there, behind her eyelids.

After that, she couldn't go on trying to make up to him for the times that Brenda was too much occupied with someone else to bother about him. It would be a kind of mockery. The only thing was to keep out of his way.

But the last evening of his embarkation leave, when he came to say good-bye, it was she who had to see him to the front door. Brenda was fey that night, with a kind of febrile gaiety, because the favoured lover of the moment was home on forty-eight hours' leave, and she had no eyes for anyone but him; and Charlotte was deeply involved with Richard Harkness. When they said good-bye, they would doubtless be driven into each other's arms. One could see it in their eyes when they looked at each other.

Lisby's eyes fell on the little willow. She seized it and put it into his outstretched hand. 'Please take it — for luck,' she said.

'But you can't give this away, Miss Avery. It's — it's ... much too lovely,' he stammered.

'Please, please — it's more yours than mine.'

'It's terribly kind of you. Your sisters — you've been so kind letting me come. I shall dream of this house.'

'But you'll come again,' said Lisby, speaking as lightly as she could.

'I'd try to... in the spirit, if not in the flesh,' he said, with his crooked smile. Why must he say a thing so devastating?

'Look at Orion — like some secret heavenly diagram,' said Lisby, at the open door, because she had no word of comfort for him (Oh, dear! He'll think I'm trying to be appealing, trying to be a poetical little puss, trying to get at him, she thought despairingly). If only Brenda would come out for a moment and be very sweet in that way she had of being responsive to another's mood! She could have given him something to take away with him, some cryptic remark, that he could dwell upon and cherish, as if it were a tiny key she had put into his hand to

unlock a door in the future. But she was caught away into a private heaven, and so he had to go without any hope.

He looked up at the heartbreaking glitter of Orion, so serene, so triumphant above the tortured world. 'A lover might use it as a code,' he said, almost under his breath. 'Abelard signing his letters to Heloise.'

He looked down at her, hesitating a moment, as if there were something he wanted to say. And then, with a sigh, he turned away. As he looked back at the gate to salute her, the little tree in his hand caught the starlight and shone with a faint blue fire.

He never wrote. Lisby, sorting out the post, sometimes looked wonderingly at a letter addressed to Brenda in a handwriting she didn't know, but the name on the flap of the envelope was never his.

When the war was over at last, Richard Harkness, liberated from a prison camp in Germany, came back to claim Charlotte. Their wedding was fixed for the autumn.

'By the way, Brenda,' Charlotte said casually one day, looking up from a letter she was writing, 'I forgot to tell you. Richard says that Simon Byrne was a prisoner in the same Offlag. he died last year.'

'Oh! poor darling!' said Brenda, in the sweet, hollow voice she used when the conventions demanded an assumption of sorrow. One's heart has been wrung so often that there had come a time when it recorded merely a mechanical spasm. She went on arranging the flowers with a set expression.

Lisby said nothing. She sat very still in the recesses of the armchair and clasped her knees to still their trembling. 'So much death, one cannot bear it,' she said at last, and got herself out of the room somehow. She always took things to heart — as if she suffered in her own body the agony of unknown millions.

'It's all very well for Lisby', said Brenda with a shrug. 'But, after all, she hasn't had any personal loss in this war. Not like you.

and me. I mean, when someone's killed who's been in love with one, it makes it all so terribly poignant. I sometimes think I've felt so much, I can't feel any more. Those poor lambs!' She sighed and dipped her face into the roses, as if she would leave with them the expression of grief she could now decently abandon. It was almost as though she were leaving them on his grave to symbolize her thoughts of him, that would fade more quickly than they. 'He was sweet, but rather dumb,' she said.

'Did he never —' asked Charlotte, looking over her tortoise-shell glasses.

'Not in so many words. You all took it for granted it was me. But perhaps, after all, you were the attraction, Charlotte.' But the hint of doubt found no expression in the tones of her voice.

'Or Lisby. It really is rather awful the way we leave her out of account.'

Charlotte sealed her letter and took off her glasses. She had a face like La Belle Ferroniere, on which the glasses had the air of an amusing affectation. But Brenda had the flowerlike delicacy of a Piero della Francesca. Lisby had seen the resemblances and had made her sisters a present of them. But no one had noticed that she herself was like a watching girl who holds a basket on her head in the background of El Greco's *Christ in the Temple*.

'Of course,' said Charlotte, affixing a stamp, 'it wasn't I. That's a thing I never make a mistake about. A woman always knows.'

'Well, I am not so cocksure about love as you seem to be. I mean, I'm inclined to say myself, "if he does so and so, if he remembers what hat I wore the day before yesterday, if he bothers to look up the address I'm staying at in the telephone book, then I shall know for certain." But I don't remember applying any such tests to Simon. Somehow we never got that far. Though I had my suspicions, of course.'

Brenda carried the roses across the room and put them on the piano, in the midst of the numerous photographs, of young

men in uniform. Surreptitiously she changed the place of one. He had been shot down over Hamburg, and his place was among the dead. Perhaps no one but herself, who was responsible for it, was aware of this arrangement of the photographs. She had a feeling about the matter of which she would not have spoken for the world. It did not exactly amount to a superstition. Perhaps it meant no more than did the meticulous dividing up of her books into their respective categories. It irritated her to find a novel thrust in between two volumes of poetry. Death, perhaps, was poetry, and life, prose. Or was it the other way round?

In the midst of preparations for the wedding, no one, it seemed, gave another thought to Simon Byrne.

'Lisby seems rather odd these days — sort of stung-up,' said Charlotte one day. 'Do you think, Brenda, that subconsciously she minds my getting married and your being engaged? I mean, it can't be much fun, poor child, seeing happiness through other people's eyes, as Shakespeare has already remarked.' She snapped off a thread and took the pins out of a seam.

Brenda looked down with preoccupied expression at the ring on her long pale hand, where it lay on a fold of crepe de Chine she had been *sewing*. 'How incredibly lucky we are that our two have come through alive!' she said. 'Gerald doesn't know *how* lucky he is; because it *might* have been John. I don't know, but I think it *might* have been. I was devastated when he was killed. I dare say you are right about Lisby. But what can we do...?'

'That cyclamen colour you've chosen for the bridesmaids — of course, you'll look divine in it, but it's trying for Lisby. Heaven knows, she's swallow enough.'

'But, my dear, what was I to do? We had the stuff and we've got no coupons. If only Gerald were back, we could have had a double wedding and both got out of Lisby's way. I feel we rather swamp her, you know — like two arc lamps putting out the moonlight. Now, isn't that a tribute to our Lis?'

Charlotte was married on a golden day. While they waited for her in the porch, Lisby thought that Brenda looked more like an Italian primitive than ever, pale and bright as an angel. (But we are all wrong for the blue horizon and the golden leaves — too shrill, too springlike, she thought.) Their reflections stained with pink the dewdrops in a spider's web slung between two tombstones.

A cab drove up to the lich-gate, and Charlotte came down the path on the arm of an uncle, her dark eyes shining through her veil. She was so majestic, so withdrawn that they did not venture to speak to her, but spread out her train, whispering nervously together.

Richard Harkness stood at the altar steps. To Lisby he had rather a vulpine look. It argued a certain spirituality in Charlotte, not to be deceived by outward appearances, but to swoop unerringly on the qualities she wanted. But he hadn't been Simon's sort. He had never mentioned Simon's name in Lisby's presence. She was grateful to him for that, but she couldn't forgive him.

She stole a glance apprehensively at the best man. He had been in the camp too — a doctor, they said. He had a dark, ascetic face, sensitive and melancholy. One must keep out of his way.

The wedding reception was like any other: the strained hilarity, the desperate frivolity, lit with a perilous brightness as of unshed tears. Corks popped, the cake was cut, the toasts proposed. Charlotte came out of her trance, and Richard made a speech so charming that all her friends began to think they knew, after all, what she saw in him.

There was Brenda by the window, trying desperately to make conversation with Captain Oliver. When her voice was high and strained like that, one knew she was wilting; and there were those faint mauve shadows under her eyes. The man was difficult. He appeared to have no capacity for small talk.

'By the way, did you come across someone who was a friend of mine — Simon Byrne? He was in the tanks,' she said.

Brenda....don't... Don't! Lisby cried out soundlessly, with a pain like cramp about her heart. His name seemed to sound through the room like a clash of cymbals. She felt that it must pierce every breastbone. It made a stranger of Brenda. It was incomprehensible that she could use it to make conversation, that to her it could be a name like any other.

Lisby saw the start that Captain Oliver gave. He turned quickly and looked at Brenda — a long, searching look.

'Yes, I knew Byrne,' he said.

'He was such a dear. We liked him so much. Look, Charlotte has gone up to change. I must fly after her.'

They were gone at last. Charlotte leaned out and waved. Someone threw a slipper after the taxicab.

In the morning at the gate, Lisby was aware of Captain Oliver edging his way toward her.

'Miss Avery,' he said in her ear, 'may I speak to you a moment alone?'

'In the morning room,' said Lisby, very pale. For some unfathomable reason she picked up her bouquet from the hall table before preceding him into the little yellow room.

A picture glowing with evening appeared in the frame of the window. In the foreground, the black trunk of the mulberry tree, about which still dangled a few heart-shaped leaves of sour green, and to the right the long silver plumes of the pampas grass, had a strange significance, as if the words "black, gold, silver" were being reiterated in a poem. The blue October mist lay beyond, veiling the lawn, and a little sumac tree burned like a torch at the edge of the mist. A bird that had abandoned music for the winter made a grasshopper sound.

The pampas grass. Charlotte had tried to dig it up — a vulgar interloper, she had said. Lisby clung desperately to her

thoughts. She did not want to hear what this man had to say. She sank down on the sofa and began mechanically to take her bouquet to pieces. The colour was drained out of her face, and she looked ghastly in the cyclamen shade that was so becoming to Brenda.

'So you knew Simon Byrne,' said Captain Oliver, looking down at her. 'I wonder... perhaps you could help me, Miss Avery? I was with him when he died.'

'Have you, perhaps, a message... for my sister?' asked Lisby faintly, arranging little sprigs of heather on her knee.

'That's what I don't know,' he said with a sigh. 'There is something I'd like to tell someone — but not the wrong person. You see, Simon meant a great deal to me. Could you tell me, did she ever give him a little tree, a willow? I suppose it was one of those Chinese things.'

'No,' said Lisby, very low, 'she never gave him anything.'

'I am going to tell you,' said Captain Oliver, as if making a sudden decision. 'A secret would be safe with you, wouldn't it? He was badly hurt, you know. His wound never healed. He was terribly ill all the time; but the odd thing was that through it all, he was never less than himself. They couldn't do anything to Simon. They couldn't strip him of a single one of his qualities. It was as if he had some inward source of happiness, a core of peace in his heart. The camp was short of doctors and they were only too pleased to make use of me, so I was able to make things a little easier for him.'

'I am glad,' she said, bent over her flowers, 'that he had you to look after him.'

'The night before he died,' went on Captain Oliver, in a low deliberate voice, 'he dictated a letter to his mother in South Africa. He was a bit of a poet, you know. It was a very touching letter. I suppose she has it now, poor soul. I said, "Is there no one else, Simon?" he shook his head. "There was a girl," he said, "but she never knew she was my girl." I asked him to tell me about

her, thinking it might comfort him. He said, "She is a little, quiet creature — like mignonette — and her eyes go light and dark with her thoughts. I knew in my bones she was meant for me. Once, when the pain was very bad, I thought she came and kissed me. I felt her cheek against mine. It was soft and cool — like young buds, as I always imagined it would be. And the pain went away and I went to sleep. You know, Robert, she wouldn't mind my dreaming that. She has such exquisite compassion. When I said good-bye, she gave me the loveliest thing she had — a little willow tree. It was smashed to bits in my kit when the shell got us." I thought to myself, "Perhaps she did care, that girl." He died toward morning, very peacefully, without speaking again.'

Lisby sat very still. 'So cold... so cold,' she said, chafing her hands as if the hands of the dying lay between them.

'So you were his girl,' said Robert Oliver.

'He was my dear, dear love,' whispered Lisby. She bowed her head on her knees and wept soundlessly.

He thought, 'it is sad for a girl when her first avowal of love has to be made to a third person.' And, going softly to the door, he turned the key in the lock and let himself out by the window.

'Lisby cried her eyes out after you left,' wrote Brenda to Charlotte. 'but at night she looked so radiant, one might have thought it was her wedding day. There were dozens of letters for you by the evening post (I've sent them on) and some for me. I sorted them out, and said, as one usually does, "None for you, I'm afraid, Lisby darling." She looked at me so strangely, and said, "I have had mine — one that was never written." What could she have meant? I said, "what on earth do you mean?" But I knew from the look on her face that it is one of those things she will never tell.'

A REVIEW

The three sisters in "*The Little Willow*" are described as sharing one quality, despite being different otherwise, that "by lamplights they acquired, in their trailing dresses, a timeless look, as if they might have stood for types of the seductive woman in any age." Blenda has taste in music but in spite of being beautiful she "could say the most divinely right things without a throb of real sympathy", and Charlotte was a "charmer", while Lisby, the youngest, "had no poetic conception of herself to impose upon the other." In fact she is the one who enkindles genuine emotions of love and sympathy for others; she would not let her sisters take the "dark picture" out of the "white room" because of its spiritual values.

"*The Little Willow*" creates an ice-chilled, frosty, cool atmosphere; sometimes of quietude, solemnity, and sometimes of death. Simon keeps the willow as a token of Lisby's love which gives him solace and strength before and at the time of death. He dies as a whole man, perfect in his faith in love, and thus defeats death with a willow tree [love], one of those Chinese things, through which: "he was never less than himself."

EXPLANATORY NOTES

<i>Hearthrug:-</i>	a small piece of carpet placed before the fireside
<i>Chaste room:-</i>	a room simply furnished
<i>Gaiety:-</i>	merry-making
<i>Scherzo in a symphony:-</i>	a sprightly instrumental musical composition or movement in quick time
<i>Incongruous:-</i>	out of place; incompatible
<i>Pseudo:-</i>	not genuine; spurious
<i>Annunciation:-</i>	an announcement; the announcement of the Incarnation to the Virgin Mary
<i>Oddly dramatic quality:-</i>	dramatic element which appears to be out of place
<i>Faint shimmer:-</i>	dim glimmer
<i>Drifted about:-</i>	moved in a random or casual way
<i>Herbaceous:-</i>	having the characteristics of a herb
<i>Glowingly:-</i>	shining
<i>Plangent voice:-</i>	loudly reverberating voice
<i>Poetic conception of herself:-</i>	imaginative romantic view of self
<i>Unassuming:-</i>	modest
<i>Aesthetic:-</i>	having a developed sense of beauty
<i>Violence:-</i>	horror; exertion of physical force so as to injure or abuse
<i>Vulnerable:-</i>	capable of being physically wounded; open to attack or damage
<i>Inverted sheaf:-</i>	upside down bundle

<i>Jade:-</i>	typically green gemstone
<i>Lacquer:-</i>	a clear or coloured varnish
<i>Extravaganza:-</i>	a literary or musical work marked by extreme freedom of style or structure
<i>Feckless:-</i>	ineffectual; weak
<i>Oasis:-</i>	a fertile or green area in a dry region
<i>Distinctly:-</i>	clearly; vividly
<i>Versed:-</i>	possessing a thorough knowledge; skill
<i>Dazzling:-</i>	shining brilliantly
<i>Conflagration:-</i>	a big burning fire
<i>Intriguing person:-</i>	engaging the interest to a marked degree; fascinating; preparing a scheme or plot secretly or underhandedly
<i>Fey:-</i>	able to see into the future; visionary
<i>Febrile gaiety:-</i>	feverish show of high spirits
<i>Devastating:-</i>	destructive
<i>Triumphant:-</i>	victorious
<i>Serene:-</i>	clear and tranquil
<i>Poignant:-</i>	painfully affecting the feelings; distressing; touching
<i>Surreptitiously:-</i>	stealthily
<i>Incredibly:-</i>	unbelievably
<i>Devastated:-</i>	ruined
<i>Cyclamen colour:-</i>	white or pink colour of the flowers of primrose family
<i>Sallow:-</i>	of a sickly yellowish colour
<i>Slung between two</i>	placed between two

<i>Imbstones:-</i>	tombstones
<i>Lich-gate:-</i>	roofed gate
<i>Vulpine look:-</i>	crafty and clever look — foxy look
<i>Apprehensively:-</i>	with fear and anxiety
<i>Strained hilarity:-</i>	subdued show of merriment
<i>Frivolity:-</i>	lack of seriousness and responsibility
<i>Cymbals:-</i>	concave brass plates that produce a brilliant clashing tone when struck with one another
<i>Unfathomable:-</i>	not capable of being fathomed; impossible to comprehend
<i>Sumac tree:-</i>	a tree having feathery leaves that turn to brilliant colors in the autumn
<i>Mignonette:-</i>	garden plants with small whitish to yellowish flowers
<i>Exquisite:-</i>	flawless; beautiful

in the morning

in the afternoon

in the evening

in the night

in the day

in the month

in the year

in the world

in the universe

in the time

in the space

in the matter

in the energy

in the force

in the power

in the strength

in the ability

in the skill

in the knowledge

in the wisdom

in the understanding

in the insight

in the perception

in the observation

in the attention

in the concentration

in the focus

in the clarity

in the precision

in the accuracy

THE BEAR

Anton Chekhov

CHARACTERS

POPOVA

LUKA

SMIRNOV

16

THE BEAR

A drawing-room in Popova's house.

POPOVA is in deep mourning and has her eyes fixed on a photograph. Luka is haranguing her.

LUKA. It isn't right, madam... You're just destroying yourself. The maid and the cook have gone off fruit picking, every living being is rejoicing, even the cat understand how to enjoy herself and walks about in the yard, catching midges; only you sit in this room all day, as if this was a convent, and don't take any pleasure. Yes, really! I reckon it's a whole year that you haven't left the house!

POPOVA. I shall never go out... Why should I? My life is already at an end. He is in his grave, and I have buried myself between four walls.... We are both dead.

LUKA. Well, there you are! Nicolai Mihailovitch is dead, well, it's the will of God, and may his soul rest in peace.... You've mourned him — and quite right. But you can't go on weeping and wearing mourning for ever. My old woman died too, when her time came. Well? I grieved over her, I wept for a month, and that's enough for her, but I've got to weep for a whole age, well, the old woman isn't worth it. [Sighs] You've forgotten all your neighbours. You don't go anywhere, and you see nobody. We live, so to speak, like spiders, and never see the light. The mice have eaten my livery. It isn't as if there were no good people

around, for the district's full of them. There's a regiment quartered at Riblov, and the officers are such be-auties — you can never gaze your fill at them. And, every Friday, there's a ball at the camp, and every day the soldier's band plays.... Eh, my lady! You're young and beautiful, with roses in your cheek — if you only took a little pleasure. Beauty won't last long, you know. In ten years' time you'll want to be a pea-hen yourself among the officers, but they won't look at you, it will be too late.

POPOVA. *[With determination]* I must ask you never to talk to me about it! You know that when Nicolai Mihailovitch died, life lost all its meaning for me. I vowed never to the end of my days to cease to wear mourning, or to see the light... You hear? Let his ghost see how well I love him... Yes, I know it's no secret to you that he was often unfair to me, cruel, and... and even unfaithful, but I shall be true till death, and show him how I can love. There, beyond the grave he will see me as I was before his death....

LUKA. Instead of talking like that you ought to go and have a walk in the garden, or else order Toby or Giant to be harnessed, and then drive out to see some of the neighbours.

POPOVA. Oh!

LUKA. Madam! Dear madam! What is it? Bless you!

POPOVA. He was so fond of Toby! He always used to ride on him to the Korchagins and Vlasovs. How well he could ride! What grace there was in his strength! Do you remember? Toby, Toby! Tel them to give him an extra feed of oats.

LUKA. Yes, madam.

[A bell rings noisily.]

POPOVA. *[Shaking]* Who's that? Tell them that I receive nobody.

[Exit.]

LUKA. Yes, madam.

POPOVA. *[Looks at the photograph]* You will see, Nicolas, how I can love and forgive..... My love will die out with me, only

when this poor heart will cease to beat. [*Laughs through her tears*] And aren't you ashamed? I am a good and virtuous little wife. "I've locked myself in, and will be true to you till the grave, and you... aren't you ashamed, you bad child? You deceived me, had rows with me, left me alone for weeks on end..."

Luka enters in consternation.

LUKA. Madam, somebody is asking for you. He wants to see you...

POPOVA. But didn't you tell him that since the death of my husband I've stopped receiving?

LUKA. I did, but he wouldn't even listen; says that it's a very pressing affair.

POPOVA. I do not receive!

LUKA. I told him so, but the... the devil...curses and pushes himself right in.... He's in the dining-room now.

POPOVA. [*Annoyed*] Very well, ask him in.... What manners! [*Exit Luka*] How these people annoy me! What does he want of me? Why should he disturb my peace? [*Sighs*] NO, I see that I shall have to go into a convent after all. [*Thoughtfully*] Yes, into a convent....

[*Enter Luka with Smirnov.*]

SMIRNOV. [*To Luka*] You fool, you're too fond of talking... Ass! [*Sees Popova and speaks with respect*] Madam, I have the honour to present myself, I am Grigory Stepanovitch Smirnov, landowner and retired lieutenant of artillery! I am compelled to disturb you on a very pressing affair.

POPOVA. [*Not giving him her hand*] What do you want?

SMIRNOV. Your late husband, with whom I had the honour of being acquainted, died in my debt for one thousand two hundred roubles, on two bills of exchange. As I've got to pay the interest on a mortgage to-morrow, I've come to ask you, madam, to pay me the money to-day.

POPOVA. One thousand two hundred ... And what was my husband in debt to you for?

SMIRNOV. He used to buy oats from me.

POPOVA. [*Sighing, to Luka*] So don't you forget, Luka, to give Toby an extra feed of oats. [*Exit Luka*] If Nicolai Mihailovitch died in debt to you, then I shall certainly pay you, but you must excuse me to-day, as I haven't any spare cash. The day after to-morrow my steward will be back from town, and I'll give him instructions to settle your account, but at the moment I cannot do as you wish Moreover, it's exactly seven months to-day since the death of my husband, and I'm in a state of mind which absolutely prevents me from giving money matters my attention.

SMIRNOV. And I'm in a state of mind which, if I don't pay the interest due to-morrow, will force me to make a graceful exit from this life feet first. They'll take my estate!

POPOVA. You'll have your money the day after to-morrow.

SMIRNOV. I don't want the money the day after to-morrow. I want it to-day.

POPOVA. You must excuse me, I can't pay you.

SMIRNOV. And I can't wait till after to-morrow.

POPOVA. Well, what can I do, if I haven't the money now!

SMIRNOV. You mean to say, you can't pay me?

POPOVA. I can't.

SMIRNOV. Hm! Is that the last word you've got to say?

POPOVA. Yes, the last word.

SMIRNOV. The last word? Absolutely your last?

POPOVA. Absolutely.

SMIRNOV. Thank you so much. I'll make a note of it. [*Shrugs his shoulders*] And then people want me to keep calm! I meet a man on the road, and he asks me: "Why are you always so

angry, Griory Stepanovitch?' But how on earth am I not to get angry? I want the money desperately. I rode out yesterday, early in the morning, and called on all my debtors, and not a single one of them paid up! I was just about dead-beat after it all, slept, goodness knows where, in some inn, kept by a Jew, with a vodka-barrel by my head. At last I get here, seventy versts from home, and hope to get something, and I am received by you with a "state of mind"! How shouldn't I get angry.

POPOVA. I thought I distinctly said my steward will pay you when he returns from town.

SMIRNOV. I didn't come to your steward, but to you! What the devil, excuse my saying so, have I to do with your steward!

POPOVA. Excuse me, sir, I am not accustomed to listen to such expressions or to such a tone of voice. I want to hear no more.

[Makes a rapid exit.]

SMIRNOV. Well, there! "A state of mind."... "Husband died seven months ago!" Must I pay the interest, or mustn't I? I ask you: Must I pay, or must I not? Suppose your husband is dead, and you've got a state of mind, and nonsense of that sort... And your steward's gone away somewhere, devil take him, what do you want me to do? Do you think I can fly away from my creditors in a balloon, or what? Or do you expect me to go and run my head into a brick wall? I go to Grusdev and he isn't at home, Yoroshevitch has hidden himself, I had a violent row with Kuritsin and nearly threw him out of the window, Mazugo has something the matter with his bowels, and this woman has "a state of mind." Not one of the swine wants to pay me! Just because I'm too gentle with them, because I'm a rag, just weak wax in their hands! I'm much too gentle with them! Well, just you wait! You'll find out what I'm like! I shan't let you play about with me, confound it! I shall jolly well stay here until she pays! Brr!... How angry I am to-day, how angry I am! All my inside is

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quivering with anger, and I can't even breathe... Foo, my word, I even feel sick! *[Yells]* Waiter!

Enter Luka.

LUKA. What is it?

SMIRNOV. Get me some kvass or water! *[Exit Luka]* What a way to reason! A man is in desperate need of his money, and she won't pay it because, you see, she is not disposed to attend to money matters!... That's real silly feminine logic. That's why I never did like, and don't like now, to have to talk to women. I'd rather sit on a barrel of gunpowder than talk to a woman. Brr!... I feel quite chilly — and it's all on account of that little bit of fluff! I can't even see one of these poetic creatures from a distance without breaking out into a cold sweat out of sheer anger. I can't look at them.

[Enter Luka with water.]

LUKA. Madam is ill and will see nobody.

SMIRNOV. Get out! *[Exit Luka]* Ill and will see nobody! No, it's all right, you don't see me.... I'm going to stay and will sit here till you give me the money. You can be ill for a week, if you like, and I'll stay here for a week.... If you're ill for a year — I'll stay for a year. I'm going to get my own, my dear! You don't get at me with your widow's weeds and your dimpled cheeks! I know those dimples! *[Shouts through the window]* Simeon, take them out! We aren't going away at once! I'm staying here! Tell them in the stable to give the horses some oats! You fool, you've let the near horse's leg get tied up in the reins again! *[Teasingly]* "Never mind..." I'll give it you. "Never mind." *[Goes away from the window]* Oh, it's bad.... The heat's frightful, nobody pays up. I slept badly, and on top of everything else here's bit of fluff in mourning with "a state of mind".... My head's aching.... Shall I have some vodka, what? Yes, I think I will. *[Yells]* Waiter!

Enter Luka.,

LUKA. What is it?

SMIRNOV. A glass of vodka! [Exit Luka] Ouf! [Sits and inspects himself] I must say I look well! Dust all over, boots dirty, unwashed, unkempt, straw on my waistcoat... The dear lady may well have taken me for a brigand. [Yawns] It's rather impolite to come into a drawing-room in this state, but it can't be helped... I am not here as a creditor, and there's no dress specially prescribed for creditors....

Enter Luka with the vodka.

LUKA. You allow yourself to go very far, sir...

SMIRNOV. [Angrily] What?

LUKA. I.... er... nothing... I really....

SMIRNOV. Whom are you talking to? Shut up!

LUKA. [Aside] The devil's come to stay.... Bad luck that brought him.... [Exit]

SMIRNOV. Oh, how angry I am! So angry that I think I could grind the whole world to dust.... I even feel sick..... [Yells] Waiter!

Enter Popova.

POPOVA. [Her eyes downcast] Sir, in my solitude I have grown unaccustomed to the masculine voice, and I can't stand shouting. I must ask you not to disturb my peace.

SMIRNOV. Pay me the money, and I'll go.

POPOVA. I told you perfectly plainly; I haven't any money to spare; wait until the day after tomorrow.

SMIRNOV. And I told you perfectly plainly I don't want the money the day after tomorrow, but to-day. If you don't pay me to-day, I'll have to hang myself to-morrow.

POPOVA. But what can I do if I haven't got the money? You're so strange!

SMIRNOV. Then you won't pay me now? Eh?

POPOVA. I can't....

SMIRNOV. In that case I stay here and shall wait until I get it. [Sits down] You're going to pay me the day after to-morrow?

Very Well! I'll stay here until the day after tomorrow. I'll sit here all the time.... [Jumps up] I ask you: Have I got to pay the interest to-morrow, or haven't I? Or do you think I'm doing this for a joke?

POPOVA. Please don't shout This isn't a stable?

SMIRNOV. I wasn't asking you about a stable, but whether I'd got my interest to pay to-morrow or not?

POPOVA. You don't know how to behave before women!

SMIRNOV. No, I do know how to behave before women!

POPOVA. No, you don't! You're a rude, ill-bred man! Decent people don't talk to a woman like that!

SMIRNOV. What a business! How do you want me to talk to you? In French, or what? [Loses his temper and lisps] *Madame, je vous prie...* How happy I am that you don't pay me... Ah, pardon. I have disturbed you! Such lovely weather to-day! And how well you look in mourning!

[Bows.

POPOVA. That's silly and rude.

SMIRNOV. [Teasing her] Silly and rude! I don't know how to behave before women! Madam, in my time I've seen more women than you've seen sparrows! Three times I've fought duels on account of women. I've refused twelve women, and mine have refused me! Yes! There was a time when I played the fool, scented myself, used honeyed words, wore jewellery, made beautiful bows.... I used to love, to suffer, to sigh at the moon, to get sour, to thaw, to freeze.... I used to love passionately, madly, every blessed way, devil take me; I used to chatter like a magpie about emancipation, and wasted half my wealth on tender feelings, but now — you must excuse me! You won't get round me like that now! I've had enough! Black eyes, passionate eyes, ruby lips, dimpled cheeks, the moon, whispers, timid breathing

— I wouldn't give a brass farthing for the lot, madam! Present company always excepted, all women, great or little, are insincere, crooked, backbiters, envious, liars to the marrow of their bones, vain, trivial, merciless, unreasonable, and, as far as this is concerned [*taps his forehead*] excuse my outspokenness, a sparrow can give ten points to any philosopher in petticoats you like to name! You look at one of these poetic creatures: all muslin, an ethereal demigoddess, you have a million transports of joy, and you look into her soul — and see a common crocodile! [*He grips the back of a chair; the chair creaks and breaks*] But the most disgusting thing of all is that this crocodile for some reason or other imagines that its *chef d'œuvre*, its privilege and monopoly, is its tender feelings. Why, confound it, hang me on that nail feet upwards, if you like, but have you met a woman who can love anybody except a lapdog? When she's in love, can she do anything but snivel and slobber? While a man is suffering and making sacrifices all her love expresses itself in her playing about with her scarf, and trying to hook him more firmly by the nose. You have the misfortune to be a woman, you know from yourself what is the nature of woman. Tell me truthfully, have you ever seen a woman who was sincere, faithful, and constant? You haven't! Only freaks and old women are faithful and constant! You'll meet a cat with a horn or a white woodcock sooner than a constant woman!

POPOVA. then, according to you, who is faithful and constant in love? Is it the man?

SMIRNOV. Yes, the man!

POPOVA. The man! [*Laughs bitterly*] Men are faithful and constant in love! What an idea! [*With heat*] What right have you to talk like that? Men are faithful and constant. Since we are talking about it, I'll tell you that of all the men I knew and know, the best was my late husband.... I loved him passionately with all my being, as only a young and imaginative woman can love, I gave him my youth, my happiness, my life, my fortune, I breathed in him, I worshipped him as if I were a heathen and... and what then? This best of men shamelessly deceived me at every step!

After his death I found in his desk a whole drawerful of love-letters, and when he was alive — it's an awful thing to remember! — he used to leave me alone for weeks at a time, and make love to other women and betray me before my very eyes; he wasted my money and made fun of my feelings.... And, in spite of all that, I loved him and was true to him.... And not only that, but, now that he is dead, I am still true and constant to his memory. I have shut myself for ever within these four walls, and will wear these weeds to the very end....

SMIRNOV. [*Laughs contemptuously*] Weeds!... I don't understand what you take me for? As if I don't know why you wear that black domino and bury yourself between four walls! I should say I did! It's so mysterious, so poetic! When some junker or some tame poet goes past your windows he'll think: "There lives the mysterious Tamara who, for the love of her husband, buried herself between four walls." We know these games!

POPOVA. [*Exploding*] What? How dare you say all that to me?

SMIRNOV. You may have buried yourself alive, but you haven't forgotten to powder your face!

POPOVA. How dare you speak to me like that?

SMIRNOV. Please don't shout, I'm not your steward! You must allow me to call things by their real names. I'm not a woman, and I'm used to saying what I think straight out! Don't you shout, either!

POPOVA. I'm not shouting, it's you! Please leave me alone!

SMIRNOV. Pay me my money and I'll go.

POPOVA. I shan't give you any money!

SMIRNOV. Oh, no, you will.

POPOVA. I shan't give you a farthing, just to spite you.

You leave me alone!

SMIRNOV. I have not the pleasure of being either your husband or your fiancé, so please don't make scenes. [*Sits*] I don't like it.

POPOVA. [*Choking with rage*] So you sit down?

SMIRNOV. I do.

POPOVA. I ask you to go away!

SMIRNOV. Give me my money... [*Aside*] Oh, how angry I am! How angry I am!

POPOVA. I don't want to talk to impudent scoundrels! Get out of this! [*Pause*] Aren't you going! No?

SMIRNOV. No.

POPOVA. No?

SMIRNOV. No.!

POPOVA. Very well then! [*Rings, enter Luka*] Luka, show this gentleman out!

LUKA. [*Approaches Smirnov*] Would you mind going out, sir, as you're asked to! You needn't...

SMIRNOV. [*Jumps up*] Shut up! Who are you talking to? I'll chop you into pieces!

LUKA. [*Clutches at his heart*] Little fathers!... What people!... [*Falls into a chair*] Oh, I'm ill! I can't breathe!

POPOVA. Where's Dasha? [*Shouts*] Dasha!

Pelageya! Dasha!

LUKA. Oh! They've all gone out to pick fruit... There's nobody at home! I'm ill! Water!

POPOVA. Get out of this, now.

SMIRNOV. Can't you be more polite?

POPOVA. [*Clenches her fists and stamps her foot*] You're a boor! A coarse bear! A Bourbon! A monster!

SMIRNOV. [*Approaching her*] May I ask what right you have to insult me?

POPOVA. And suppose I am insulting you? Do you think I'm afraid of you?

SMIRNOV. And do you think that just because you're a poetic creature you can insult me with impunity? Eh? We'll fight it out!

LUKA. Little fathers!... What people! ... Water!

SMIRNOV. Pistols!

POPOVA. Do you think I'm afraid of you just because you have large fists and a bull's throat? Eh? You Bourbon!

SMIRNOV. We'll fight it out! I'm not going to be insulted by anybody, and I don't care if you are a woman, one of the "softer sex," indeed!

POPOVA. [*Trying to interrupt him*] Bear! Bear! Bear!

SMIRNOV. It's about time we got rid of the prejudice that only men need pay for their insults. Devil take it, if you want equality rights you can have it. We're going to fight it out!

POPOVA. With pistols? Very well!

SMIRNOV. This very minute

POPOVA. This very minute! My husband had some pistols.... I'll bring them here. [*Is going, but turns back*] What pleasure it will give me to put a bullet into your thick head!

Devil take you!

[*Exit*

SMIRNOV. I'll bring her down like chicken! I'm not a little boy or a sentimental puppy; I don't care about this "softer sex"

LUKA. Gracious little fathers!... [*Kneels*] Have pity on poor old man, and go away from here! You've frightened her to death, and now you want to shoot her!

SMIRNOV. [Not hearing him] if she fights, well that's equality rights, emancipation, and all that! Here the sexes are equal! I'll shoot her on principle! But what a woman! [Parodying her] "Devil take you! I'll put a bullet into your thick head." Eh? How she reddened, how her cheeks shone!... She accepted my challenge! My word, it's the first time in my life that I've seen....

LUKA. Go away, sir, and I'll always pray to God for you!

SMIRNOV. She is a woman! That's the sort I can understand! A real woman! Not a sour-faced jellybag, but fire, gunpowder, a rocket! I'm even sorry to have to kill her!

LUKA. [Weeps] Dear... dear sir, do go away!

SMIRNOV. I absolutely like her! Absolutely! Even though her cheeks are dimpled, I like her! I'm almost ready to let the debt go... and I'm not angry any longer.... Wonderful woman

Enter Popova with pistols.

POPOVA. Here are the pistols.... But before we fight you must show me how to fire. I've never held a pistol in my hands before.

LUKA. Oh, Lord, have mercy and save her... I'll go and find the coachman and the gardener.... Why has this infliction come on us...

[Exit.]

SMIRNOV. [Examining the pistols] You see, there are several sorts of pistols... There are Mortimer pistols, specially made for duels, they fire a percussion-cap. These are Smith and Wesson revolvers, triple action, with extractors.... These are excellent pistols. They can't cost less than ninety roubles the pair... You must told the revolver like this.... [Aside] Her eyes, her eyes! What an inspiring woman!

POPOVA. Like this

SMIRNOV. Yes, like this... Then you cock the trigger, and take aim like this... Put your head back a little!

Hold your arm out properly.... Like that... Then you press this thing with your finger — and that's all. The great thing is to keep cool and aim steadily.... Try not to jerk your arm.

POPOVA. Very well.... It's inconvenient to shoot in a room let's go into the garden.

SMIRNOV. Come along then. But I warn you, I'm going to fire in the air.

POPOVA. That's the last straw! Why?

SMIRNOV. Because... because.... it's my affair.

POPOVA. Are you afraid? Yes? Ah! No, you don't get out of it! You come with me! I shan't have any peace until I've made a hole in your forehead... that forehead which I hate so much! Are you afraid?

SMIRNOV. Yes, I am afraid.

POPOVA. You lie! Why won't you fight?

SMIRNOV. Because.... because you.... because I like you.

POPOVA. [Laughs] He likes me! He dares to say that he likes me! [Points to the door] That's the way.

SMIRNOV. [*Loads the revolver in silence, takes his cap and goes to the door. There he stops for half a minute, while they look at each other in silence, then he hesitatingly approaches Popova*] Listen... Are you still angry?

I'm devilishly annoyed, too... but, do you understand... how can I express myself?... The fact is, you see, it's like this, so to speak... [Shouts] Well, is it my fault that I like you? [*He snatches at the back of a chair; the chair creaks and breaks*] Devil take it, how I'm smashing up your furniture! I like you!

POPOVA. Get away from me — I hate you!

SMIRNOV. God, what a woman! I've never in my life seen one like her! I'm lost! Done for! Fallen into a mousetrap, like a mouse!

POPOVA. Stand back, or I'll fire!

SMIRNOV. Fire, then! You can't understand what happiness it would be to die before those beautiful eyes, to be shot by a revolver held in that little, velvet hand... I'm out of my senses! Think, and make up your mind at once, because if I go out we shall never see each other again! Decide now... I am a landowner, of respectable character, have an income of ten thousand a year.... I can put a bullet through a coin tossed into the air as it comes down... I own some fine horses.... Will you be my wife?

POPOVA. [*Indignantly shakes her revolver*] Let's fight! Let's go out!

SMIRNOV. I'm mad... I understand nothing... [*Yells*] Waiter, water!

POPOVA. [*Yells*] Let's go out and fight!

SMIRNOV. I'm off my head, I'm in love like a boy, like a fool! [*Snatches her hand, she screams with pain*] I love you! [*Kneels*] I love you as I've never loved before! I've refused twelve women, nine have refused me, but I never loved one of them as I love you... I'm weak, I'm wax, I've melted... I'm on my knees like a fool, offering you my hand... Shame, shame! I haven't been in love for five years, I'd taken a vow, and now all of a sudden I'm in love, like a fish out of water! I offer you my hand. Yes or no? You don't want me? Very well!

[*Gets up and quickly goes to the door.*]

POPOVA. Stop.

SMIRNOV. [*Stops*] Well?

POPOVA. Nothing, go away.... No, stop... No, go away, go away! I hate you! Or no.... Don't go away! Oh, if you knew how angry I am, how angry I am! [*Throws her revolver on the table*] My fingers have swollen because of all this... [*Tears her handkerchief in temper*] what are you waiting for? Get out!

SMIRNOV. Good-bye.

POPOVA. Yes, yes, go away!... [Yells] Where are you going? Stop..... No, go away. Oh, how angry I am! Don't come near me, don't come near me!

SMIRNOV. [*Approaching her*] How angry I am with myself! I'm in love like a student, I've been on my knees.... [*Rudely*] I love you! What do I want to fall in love with you for? To-morrow I've got to pay the interest, and begin mowing, and here you... [*Puts his arms around her*] I shall never forgive myself for this....

POPOVA. Get away from me! Take your hands away! I hate you! Let's go and fight!

A tender touch. Enter Luka with an axe, the Gardener with a rake, the Coachman with a pitchfork, and Workmen with poles.

LUKA. [*Catches sight of the pair touching each other*] Little fathers!

[*Pause.*]

POPOVA. [*Lowering her eyes*] Luka, tell them in the stables that Toby isn't to have any oats at all to-day.

CURTAIN

A REVIEW

Chekhov's art has been described as psychological, but his psychology ignores the individual. His characters are not persons but just men and women, the genus homo, an indifferentiated mass of humanity, divided into watertight compartments by the phenomenon of individuality, which does not make one being different from another but only inaccessible to him.

Chekhov's dramatic work consists of the same element as his narrative work. It includes numerous one-act plays which were extremely popular in Russia. Belonging to a later period than the comic stories, they are also on a higher artistic level. The serious plays are five in number — *Ivanov*, *The Seagull*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Three Sisters*, *The Cherry Orchard*. They have many points in common with his stories; one main difference is that while the stories invariably centre round a single person from whose standpoint the situation is developed, the dramas have no such central figure, and all the characters have more or less equal rights on the stage. The plays are as it were, symphonies for an orchestra of parts, and the resultant effect is arrived at by the complex interaction of the various voices. They are plays of "atmosphere," the English word that comes nearest to the Russian *nastroenie* (*Stimmung*). The principle thing in them is not the action but the emotional accompaniment of the action. In the "de-theatricalisation" of the theatre, in the complete avoidance of all traditional stage effects (though he introduced a new kind of "atmospheric" effect, as the famous string bursting at the end of *The Cherry Orchard*), Chekhov is the logical limit of the preceding development of the Russian drama. He did not go much further in this respect than Turgenev or Ostrovsky, but he built a more consistent dramatic system with a completely adequate technique.

To the Russia of to-day Chekhov is perhaps more alien than any other Russian writer of his rank.

On the other hand, his vogue and his influence outside Russia have of recent years grown immensely and were in 1927 probably near their zenith. England has proved particularly sensitive to his charm. He is almost universally regarded as the greatest Russian writer and as the greatest story-teller and dramatist of modern times.

THE BOY COMES HOME

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

A. A. Milne

CHARACTERS

UNCLE JAMES

AUNT EMILY

PHILIP

MARY

MRS HIGGINS

THE BOY COMES HOME

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CHARACTERS

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MRS HIGGINS

17

THE BOY COMES HOME

SCENE: A room in UNCLE JAMES'S house in the Cromwell Road.

Time: The day after the War.

Any room in Uncle James's house is furnished in heavy midvictorian style; this particular morning-room is perhaps solider and more respectable even than the other, from the heavy table in the middle of it to the heavy engravings on the walls. There are two doors to it. The one at the back opens into the hall, the one at the side into the dining-room.

PHILIP comes in from the hall and goes into the dining-room. Apparently he finds nothing there, for he returns to the morning-room, looks about him for a moment and then rings the bell. It is ten o'clock, and he wants his breakfast. He picks up the paper, and sits in a heavy armchair in front of the fire — a pleasant-looking wellbuilt person of twenty-three, with an air of decisiveness about him. Mary, the parlour-maid, comes in.

MARY. Did you ring, Maser Philip?

Philip [*absently*]. Yes; I want some breakfast, please, Mary.
Mary [*coldly*]. Breakfast has been cleared away an hour ago.

PHILIP. Exactly. That's why I rang. You can boil me a couple of eggs or something. And coffee, not tea.

MARY. I'm sure I don't know what Mrs Higgins will say?

PHILIP *[getting up]*. Who is Mrs Higgins?

MARY. The cook, And she's not used to being put about like this.

PHILIP. Do you think she'll say something?

MARY. I don't know what she'll say.

PHILIP. You needn't tell me, you know, if you don't want to. Anyway, I don't suppose it will shock me. One gets used to it in the Army. *[He smiles pleasantly at her.]*

MARY. Well, I'll do what I can, sir. But breakfast at eight sharp is the master's rule, just as it used to be before you went away to the war.

PHILIP. Before I went away to the war I did a lot of silly things. Don't drag them up now. *[More curtly]* Two eggs, and if there's a ham bring that along too. *[He turns away.]*

Mary *[doubtfully, as she prepares to go]*. Well, I'm sure I don't know what Mrs Higgins will say. *[Exit Mary.]*

[As she goes out she makes way for Aunt Emily to come in, a kind-hearted mid-Victorian lady who has never had any desire of the vote.]

EMILY. There you are, Philip! Good-morning, dear. Did you sleep well?

PHILIP. Rather; splendidly, thanks, Aunt Emily. How are you? *[He kisses her.]*

EMILY. And did you have a good breakfast? Naughty boy to be late for it. I always thought they had to get up so early in the Army.

PHILIP. They do. That's why they're so late when they get out of the Army.

EMILY. Dear me! I should have thought a habit of four years would have stayed with you.

PHILIP *[getting up]*. Who is Mrs Higgins?

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EMILY. And did you have a good breakfast? Naughty boy to be late for it. I always thought they had to get up so early in the Army.

PHILIP. They do. That's why they're so late when they get out of the Army.

EMILY. Dear me! I should have thought a habit of four years would have stayed with you.

PHILIP. Every morning for four years, I've shot out of bed, I've said to myself, 'Wait! A time will come.' [Smiling] That doesn't really give a habit a chance.

EMILY. Well, I daresay you wanted your sleep out. I was so afraid that a really cosy bed would keep you awake after all those years in the trenches.

PHILIP. Well, one isn't in the trenches all the time. And one gets leave — if one's an officer.

EMILY [reproachfully]. You didn't spend much of it with us, Philip.

PHILIP [Taking her hands] I know; but you did understand, didn't you, dear?

EMILY. We're not very gay, and I know you must have wanted gaiety for the little time you had. But I think your Uncle James felt it. After all, dear, you've lived with us for some years, and he is your guardian.

PHILIP. I know You've been a darling to me always, Aunt Emily, but [awkwardly] Uncle James and I —

EMILY. Of course, he is a little difficult to get on with. I'm more used to him. But I am sure he really is very fond of you, Philip.

PHILIP. H'm! I always used to be frightened of him... I suppose he's just the same. He seemed just the same last night — and he still has breakfast at eight o'clock. Been making pots of money, I suppose?

EMILY. He never tells me exactly, but he did speak once about the absurdity of the excess-profits tax. You see, jam is a thing the Army wants.

PHILIP. It certainly gets it.

EMILY. It was so nice for him, because it made him feel he was doing his bit, helping the poor men in the trenches.

Enter MARY

MARY. Mrs Higgins wishes to speak to you, ma'am. [She looks at PHILIP as much as to say, "There you are!"]

EMILY [*getting up*]. Yes, I'll come. [To PHILIP] I think I'd better just see what she wants, Philip.

PHILIP [*firmly to Mary*]. Tell Mrs Higgins to come here. [Mary] *hesitates and looks at her mistress.* At once, please.

[Exit Mary.]

EMILY [*upset*]. Philip, dear, I don't know what Mrs Higgins will say —

PHILIP. No; nobody seems to. I thought we might really find out for once.

EMILY [*going towards the door*]. Perhaps I'd better go —

PHILIP [*putting his arm round her waist*]. Oh no, you mustn't. You see, she really wants to see me.

EMILY. You?

PHILIP. Yes; I ordered breakfast five minutes ago.

EMILY. Philip! My poor boy! Why didn't you tell me? and I daresay I could have got it for you. Though I don't know what Mrs Higgins —

[*An extremely angry voice is heard outside, and Mrs. Higgins, stout and aggressive, comes in*]

MRS HIGGINS [*truculently*]. You sent for me, ma'am?

EMILY [*calmly*]. I sent for you, Mrs Higgins. I want some breakfast. Didn't Mary tell you?

MRS HIGGINS. Breakfast is at eight o'clock. It always has been as long as I've been in this house, and always will be until I get further orders.

PHILIP. Well, you've just got further orders. Two eggs, and if there's a ham —

MRS HIGGINS. Orders. We're talking about orders. From whom in this house do I take orders, may I ask?

PHILIP. In this case from me.

MRS HIGGINS [*playing her trump-card*]. In that case, ma'am I wish to give a month's notice from to-day. Inclusive.

PHILIP [*quickly, before his aunt can say anything*]. Certainly. In fact you'd probably prefer it if my aunt gave you notice, and then you could go at once. We can easily arrange that. [To Aunt Emily as he takes out a fountainpen and cheque-book] What do you pay her?

EMILY [*faintly*]. Forty-five pounds

PHILIP [*writing on his knee*]. Twelves into forty-five.... [*Pleasantly to Mrs Higgins, but without looking up*] I hope you don't mind a Cox's cheque. Some people do; but this is quite a good one. [*Tearing it out*] Here you are

MRS HIGGINS [*taken aback*]. What's this?

PHILIP. Your wages instead of notice. Now you can go at once.

MRS HIGGINS. Who said anything about going?

PHILIP [*surprised*]. I'm sorry; I thought you did.

MRS HIGGINS. If it's only a bit of breakfast, I don't say but what I mightn't get it, if I'm asked decent.

PHILIP [*putting back the cheque*]. Then let me say again, "Two eggs, ham and coffee." And Mary can bring the ham up at once, and I'll get going on that. [*Turning away*] Thanks very much.

MRS HIGGINS. Well, I — well — well! [*Exit speechless*].

PHILIP [*surprised*]. Is that all she ever says? It isn't much to worry about.

EMILY. Philip, how could you! I should have been terrified.

PHILIP. Well, you see, I've done your job for two years out there.

EMILY. What job?

PHILIP. Mess President.... I think I'll go and see about that ham.

[He smiles at her and goes out into the dining-room. Aunt Emily wanders round the room, putting a few things tidy as is her habit, when she is interrupted by the entrance of Uncle James. James is not a big man, nor an impressive one in his black morning-coat; and his thin straggly beard, now going grey, does not hide a chin of any great power; but he has a severity which passes for strength with the weak.]

JAMES. Philip down yet?

EMILY. He's just having his breakfast.

JAMES *[looking at his watch]*. Ten o'clock. *[Snapping it shut and putting it back]* Ten o'clock. I say ten o'clock, Emily.

EMILY. Yes, dear, I heard you.

JAMES. You don't say anything?

EMILY *[vaguely]*. I expect he's tired after that long war.

JAMES. That's no excuse for not being punctual. I suppose he learnt punctuality in the Army?

EMILY. I expect he learnt it, James, but I understood him to say that he'd forgotten it.

JAMES. Then the sooner he learns it again the better. I particularly stayed away from the office to-day in order to talk things over with him, and *[looking at his watch]* here's ten o'clock — past ten — and no sign of him. I'm practically throwing away a day.

EMILY. What are you doing to talk to him about?

JAMES. His future, naturally. I have decided that the best thing he can do is to come into the business at once.

EMILY. Are you really going to talk it over with him, James, or are you just going to tell him that he *must* come?

JAMES [*surprised*]. What do you mean? What's the difference? Naturally we shall talk it over first, and — er — naturally he'll fall in with my wishes.

EMILY. I suppose he can hardly help himself, poor boy.

JAMES. Not until he's twenty-five, anyhow. When he's twenty-five he can have his own money and do what he likes with it.

EMILY [*timidly*]. But I think you ought to consult him a little, dear. After all, he has been fighting for us.

JAMES [*with his back to the fire*]. Now that's the sort of silly sentiment that there's been much too much of. I object to it strongly. I don't want to boast, but I think I may claim to have done my share. I gave up my nephew to my country, and I — er — suffered from the shortage of potatoes to an extent that you probably didn't realize. Indeed, if it hadn't been for your fortunate discovery about that time that you didn't really like potatoes, I don't know how we should have carried on. And, as I think I've told you before, the excess-profits tax seemed to me a singularly stupid piece of legislation — but I paid it. And I don't go boasting about how much I paid.

EMILY [*unconvinced*]. Well, I think that Philip's four years out there have made him more of a man; he doesn't seem somehow like a boy who can be told what to do. I'm sure they've taught him something.

JAMES. I've no doubt that they've taught him something about — er — bombs and — er — which end a revolver goes off, and how to form fours. But I don't see that sort of thing helps him to decide upon the most suitable career for a young man in after-war conditions.

EMILY. Well, I can only say you'll find him different.

JAMES. I didn't notice any particular difference last night.

EMILY. I think you'll find him rather more — I can't quite think of the word, but Mrs Higgins could tell you what I mean.

JAMES. Of course, if he likes to earn his living any other way, he may; but I don't see how he proposes to do it so long as I hold the purse-strings. [*Looking at his watch*] perhaps you'd better tell him that I cannot wait any longer.

[*Emily opens the door leading into the dining-room and talks through it to Philip.*]

EMILY. Philip, your uncle is waiting to see you before he goes to the office. Will you be long, dear?

PHILIP [*from the dining-room*]. Is he in a hurry?

JAMES [*shortly*]. Yes.

EMILY. He says he is rather, dear.

PHILIP. Couldn't he come and talk in here? It wouldn't interfere with my breakfast.

JAMES. No.

EMILY. He says he'd rather you came to *him*, darling.

PHILIP [*resigned*]. Oh, well.

EMILY [*to James*]. He'll be here directly, dear. Just sit down in front of the fire and make yourself comfortable with the paper. He won't keep you long. [*She arranges him*].

JAMES [*taking the paper*]. The morning is not the time to make oneself comfortable. It's a most dangerous habit. I nearly found myself dropping off in front of the fire just now. I don't like this hanging about, wasting the day. [*He opens the paper.*]

EMILY. You should have had a nice sleep, dear, while you could. We were up so late night listening to Philip's stories.

JAMES. Yes, yes. [*He begins a yawn and stifles it hurriedly.*] You mustn't neglect your duties, Emily. I've no doubt you have plenty to do.

EMILY. All right, James, then I'll leave you. But don't be hard on the boy.

JAMES *[sleepily]*. I shall be just, Emily; you can rely upon that.

EMILY *[going to the door]*. I don't think that's quite what I meant.

[She goes out.]

[James, who is now quite comfortable, begins to nod. He wakes up with a start, turns over the paper, and nods again. Soon he is breathing deeply with closed eyes.]

PHILIP *[coming in]*. Sorry to have kept you waiting, but I was bit late for breakfast. *[He takes out his pipe.]* Are we going to talk business or what?

JAMES *[taking out his watch]*. A bit late! I make it just two hours.

PHILIP *[pleasantly]*. All right, Uncle James. Call it two hours late. Or twenty-two hours early for to-morrow's breakfast, if you like. *[He sits down in a chair on the opposite side of the table from his uncle, and lights his pipe.]*

JAMES You smoke now?

PHILIP *[staggered]*. I what?

JAMES *[nodding at his pipe]*. You smoke?

PHILIP. Good heavens! what do you think we did in France?

JAMES. Before you start smoking all over the house, I should have thought you would have asked your aunt's permission.

[Philip looks at him in amazement, and then goes to the door.]

PHILIP *[calling]*. Aunt Emily!... Aunt Emily!... Do you mind my smoking here?

AUNT EMILY [*from upstairs*]. Of course not, darling.

PHILIP [*to James, as he returns to his chair*]. Of course not, darling. [He puts back his pipe in his mouth.]

JAMES. Now, understand once and for all, Philip, while you remain in my house I expect not only punctually, but also civility and respect. I will not have impertinence.

PHILIP. [*unimpressed*] Well, that's what I want to talk to you about, uncle James. About staying in your house, I mean.

PHILIP. Well, we don't get on too well together, and I thought perhaps I'd better take rooms somewhere. You could give me an allowance until I came into my money. Or I suppose you could give me the money now if you really liked. I don't quite know how father left it to me.

JAMES [*coldly*]. You come into your money when you are twenty-five. Your father very wisely felt that to trust a large sum to a mere boy of twenty-one was simply putting temptation in his way. Whether I have the power or not to alter his dispositions, I certainly don't propose to do so.

PHILIP. If it comes to that, I am twenty-five.

JAMES. Indeed? I had an impression that that event took place in about two years' time. When did you become twenty-five, may I ask?

PHILIP [*quietly*]. It was on the Somme. We were attacking the next day and my company was in support. We were in a so-called trench on the edge of a wood — a damned rotten place to be, and we got hell. The company commander sent back to ask if we could move. The C.O. said, "Certainly not; hang on." We hung on" doing nothing, you know — just hanging on and waiting for the next day. Of course, the Boche knew all about that. He had it on us nicely... [Sadly] Poor old Billy! he was one of the best — our company commander, you know. They got him, poor devil! That left me in command of the company. I sent a runner back to ask if I could move. Well, I'd had a bit of a scout on my own and found a sort of trench five hundred yards to the

right. Not what you'd call a trench, of course, but compared to that wood — well, it was absolutely Hyde Park. I described the position and asked if I could go there. My man never came back. I waited an hour and sent another man. He went west too. Well, I wasn't going to send a third. It was murder. So I had to decide. We'd lost about half the company by this time, you see. Well, there were three things I could do — hang on, move to this other trench, against orders, or go back myself and explain the situation.... I moved.... And then I went back to the C.O. and told him I'd moved.... And then I went back to the company again.... [Quietly] That was when I became twenty-five... or thirty-five.... or forty-five.

JAMES [recovering himself with an effort]. Ah yes, yes. [He coughs awkwardly.] No doubt points like that frequently crop up in the trenches. I am glad that you did well out there, and I'm sure your Colonel would speak kindly of you; but when it comes to choosing a career for you now that you have left the Army, my advice is not altogether to be despised. Your father evidently thought so, or he would not have entrusted you to my care.

PHILIP. My father didn't foresee this war.

JAMES. Yes, yes, but you make too much of this war. All you young boys seem to think you've come back from France to teach us our business. You'll find that it is you who'll have to learn, not we.

PHILIP. I'm quite prepared to learn; in fact, I want to.

JAMES. Excellent. Then we can consider that settled.

PHILIP. Well, we haven't settled yet what business I'm going to learn.

JAMES. I don't think that's very difficult. I propose to take you into my business. You'll start at the bottom, of course, but it will be a splendid opening for you.

PHILIP [thoughtfully]. I see. So you've decided it for me? The jam business.

JAMES. If you knew which side your bread was buttered it would appeal to you very considerably.

PHILIP. I'm afraid I can't see the butter for the jam.

JAMES. I don't want any silly jokes of that sort. You were glad enough to get it out there, I've no doubt.

PHILIP. Oh yes. Perhaps good, Uncle James; you must think of something else.

JAMES [*with a sneer*]. Perhaps you've thought of something else?

PHILIP. Well, I had some idea of being an architect —

JAMES. You propose to start learning to be an architect at twenty-three?

PHILIP [*smiling*]. Well, I couldn't start before, could I?

JAMES. Exactly. And now you'll find it's too late.

PHILIP. Is it? Aren't there going to be any more architects, or doctors, or solicitors, or barristers? Because we've all lost four years of our lives, are all the professions going to die out?

JAMES. And how old do you suppose you'll be before you're earning money as an architect?

PHILIP. The usual time, whatever that may be. If I'm four years behind, so is everybody else.

JAMES. Well, I think it's high time you began to earn a living at once.

PHILIP. Look here, Uncle James, do you really think that you can treat me like a boy who's just left school? Do you think four years at the front have made no difference at all?

JAMES. If there had been any difference, I should have expected it to take the form of an increased readiness to obey orders and recognize authority.

PHILIP [*regretfully*]. You are evidently determined to have a row. Perhaps I had better tell you once and for all that I refuse to go into the turnip and vegetable marrow business.

JAMES [*thumping the table angrily*]. And perhaps I'd better tell you, sir, once and for all, that I don't propose to allow rudeness from an impertinent young puppy.

PHILIP [*reminiscently*]. I remember annoying our Brigadier once. He was covered with red, had a very red face, about twenty medals, and a cold blue eyes. He told me how angry he was for about five minutes while I stood to attention. I'm afraid you aren't nearly so impressive, Uncle James.

JAMES [*rather upset*]. Oh! [*Recovering himself*] Fortunately I have other means of impressing you. The Power of the purse goes a long way in this world. I propose to use it.

PHILIP. I see... Yes... that's rather awkward, isn't it?

JAMES [*pleasantly*]. I think you'll find it very awkward.

PHILIP [*thoughtfully*]. Yes.

[*With an amused laugh James settles down to his paper as if the interview were over.*]

PHILIP [*to himself*]. I suppose I shall have to think of another argument. [*He takes out a revolver from his pocket and fondles it affectionately.*]

JAMES [*looking up suddenly as he is doing this — amazed*]. What on earth are you doing?

PHILIP. Souvenir from France. Do you know, Uncle James, that this revolver has killed about twenty Germans?

JAMES [*shortly*]. Oh! Well, don't go playing about with it here, or you'll be killing Englishmen before you know where you are.

PHILIP. Well, you never know. [*He raises it leisurely and points it at his uncle.*] It's a nice little weapon.

JAMES [*angrily*]. Put it down, sir. You ought to have grown out of monkey tricks like that in Army. You ought to know better than to point an unloaded revolver at anybody. That's the way accidents always happen.

PHILIP. Not when you've been on a revolver course and know all about it. Besides, it is loaded.

JAMES [*very angry because he is frightened suddenly*]. Put it down at once, sir. [*Philip turns it away from him and examines it carelessly.*] What's the matter with you? Have you gone mad suddenly?

PHILIP [*mildly*]. I thought you'd be interested in it. It's shot such a lot of Germans.

JAMES. Well, it won't want to shoot any more, and the sooner you rid of the better.

PHILIP. I wonder. Does it ever occur to you, Uncle James, that there are about a hundred thousand people in England who own revolvers, who are quite accustomed to them and — who have nobody to practise on now?

JAMES. No sir, it certainly doesn't.

PHILIP [*thoughtfully*]. I wonder if it will make any difference. You know, one gets so used to potting at people. It's rather difficult to realize suddenly that one oughtn't to.

JAMES [*getting up*]. I don't know what the object of all this tomfoolery is, if it has one. But you understand that I expect you to come to the office with me to-morrow at nine o'clock. Kindly see that you're punctual. [*he turns to go away.*]

PHILIP [*softly*]. Uncle James

JAMES [*over his shoulder*]. I have no more —

PHILIP [*in his parade voice*]. Damn it, sir! Stand to attention when you talk to an officer! [*James instinctively turns round and stiffens himself*]. That's better; you can sit down if you like. [*He motions James to his chair with the revolver.*] JAMES [*going nervously to his chair*]. What does this bluff mean?

PHILIP. It isn't bluff, it's quite serious. [*Pointing the revolver at his uncle*] Do sit down.

JAMES [*sitting down*]. Threats, eh?

PHILIP. Persuasion.

JAMES. At the point of the revolver? You settle your arguments by force? Good heavens, sir! this is just the very thing that we were fighting to put down.

PHILIP. We were fighting! We! We! Uncle, you're a humorist.

JAMES. Well, "you," if you prefer it. Although those of us who stayed at home —

PHILIP. Yes, never mind about the excess profits now. I can tell you quite well what we fought for. We used force to put down force. That's what I'm doing now. You were going to use force — the force of money — to make me do what you wanted. Now I'm using force to stop it. [*He levels the revolver again.*]

JAMES. You're — you're going to shoot your old uncle?

PHILIP. Why not? I've shot lots of old uncles — Landsturmiers.

JAMES. But those were Germans! It's different shooting Germans. You're in England now. You couldn't have a crime on your conscience like that.

PHILIP. Ah, but you mustn't think that after four years of war one has quite the same ideas about the sanctity of human life. How could one?

JAMES you'll find that juries have kept pretty much the same ideas, I fancy.

PHILIP. Yes, but revolvers often go off accidentally. You said so yourself. This is going to be the purest accident. Can't you see it in the papers? "The deceased's nephew, who was obviously upset —"

JAMES. I suppose you think it's brave to come back from the front and threaten a defenceless man with a revolver? Is that the sort of fairplay they teach you in the Army?

PHILIP. Good Heavens! of course it is. You don't think that you wait until the other side has got just as many guns as you before you attack? You're really rather lucky. Strictly speaking, I ought to have thrown half a dozen bombs at you first. [*Taking one out of his pocket*] As it happens, I've only got one.

JAMES [*thoroughly alarmed*]. Put that back at once.

PHILIP [*putting down the revolver and taking it in his hands*]. You hold it in the right hand — so — taking care to keep the lever down. Then you take the pin in the finger — so, and — but perhaps this doesn't interest you?

JAMES [*edging his chair away*]. Put it down at once, sir. Good heavens! anything might happen.

PHILIP [*putting it down and taking up the revolver again*]. Does it ever occur to you, Uncle James, that there are about three million people in England who know all about bombs, and how to throw them, and —

JAMES. It certainly does not occur to me. I should never dream of letting these things occur to me.

PHILIP [*looking at the bomb regretfully*]. It's rather against my principles as a soldier, but just to make things a bit more fair — [*generously*] you shall have it. [*He holds it out to him suddenly.*]

JAMES [*shrinking back again*]. Certainly not, sir. It might go off at any moment.

PHILIP [*putting it back in his pocket*]. Oh no; it's quite useless; there's no detonator..... [*Sternly*] Now, then let's talk business.

JAMES. What do you want me to do?

PHILIP. Strictly speaking, you should be holding your hands over your head and saying "kamerad!" However, I'll let you off that. All I ask from you is that you should be reasonable.

JAMES. And if I refuse, you'll shoot me?

PHILIP. Well, I don't quite know, Uncle James. I expect we should go through this little scene again tomorrow. You haven't enjoyed it, have you? Well, there's lots more of it to come. We'll rehearse it every day. One day, if you go on being unreasonable, the thing will go off. Of course, you think that I shouldn't have the pluck to fire. But you can't be quite certain. It's a hundred to one that I shan't — only I might. Fear — it's a horrible thing. Elderly men die of it sometimes.

JAMES. Pooh! I'm not to be bluffed like that.

PHILIP [*suddenly*]. You're quite right; you're not that sort. I made a mistake. [*Aiming carefully*] I shall have to do it straight off, after all. One — two —

JAMES [*on his knees, with uplifted hands, in an agony of terror*]. Philip! Mercy! What are your terms?

PHILIP [*picking him up by the scruff, and helping him into the chair*]. Good man, that's the way to talk. I'll get them for you. Make yourself comfortable in front of the fire till I come back. Here's the paper. [*He gives his uncle the paper, and goes out into the hall.*]

[JAMES opens his eyes with a start and looks round him in bewildered way. He rubs his heads, takes out his watch and looks at it, and then stares round the room again. The door from the dining-room opens, and Philip comes in with a piece of toast in his hand.

PHILIP [*his mouth full*]. You wanted to see me, Uncle James?

JAMES [*still bewildered*]. That's all right, my boy, that's all right. What have you been doing?

PHILIP [*surprised*]. Breakfast. [*Putting the last piece in his mouth*] Rather late, I'm afraid.

JAMES. That's all right. [*He laughs awkwardly.*]

PHILIP. Anything the matter? You don't look your usual bright self.

JAMES I — er — seem to have dropped asleep in front of the fire: Most unusual thing for me to have done. Most unusual.

PHILIP. Let that be a lesson to you not to get up so early. Of course, if you're in the Army you can't help yourself. Thank heaven I'm out of it, and my own master again.

JAMES. Ah, that's what I wanted to talk to you about. Sit down, Philip. *[He indicates the chair by the fire.]*

PHILIP *[taking a chair by the table]*. You have that, uncle; I shall be all right here.

JAMES *[hastily]*. No, no; you come here. *[He gives Philip the armchair and sits by the table himself.]* I should be dropping off again. *[He laughs awkwardly.]*

PHILIP. Righto. *[He puts his hand to his pocket. Uncle James shivers and looks at him in horror. Philip brings out his pipe, and a sickly grin of relief comes into James's face.]*

JAMES. I suppose you smoked a lot in France?

PHILIP. Rather! Nothing else to do. It's allowed in here?

JAMES. *[hastily]*. Yes, yes, of course. *[Philip lights his pipe.]* Well now, Philip, what are you going to do, now you've left the Army?

PHILIP *[promptly]*. Burn my uniform and sell my revolver.

JAMES *[starting at the word "revolver"]*. Sell your revolver, eh?

PHILIP *[surprised]*. Well, I don't want it now, do I?

JAMES. No... Oh, no... Oh, most certainly not, I should say. Oh, I can't see why you should want it at all. *[With an uneasy laugh]* You're in England now. No need for revolvers here — eh?

PHILIP. *[staring at him]*. Well, no, I hope not.

JAMES *[hastily]*. Quite so. Well now, Philip, what next? We must find a profession for you.

PHILIP [*yawning*]. I suppose so. I haven't really thought about it much.

JAMES. You never wanted to be an architect?

PHILIP [*surprised*]. Architect? [*James rubs his head and wonders what made him think of architect.*]

JAMES. Or anything like that.

PHILIP. It's a bit late, isn't it?

JAMES. Well, if you're four years behind, so is everybody else. [*He feels vaguely that he has heard this argument before.*]

PHILIP [*smiling*]. To tell the truth, I don't feel I mind much anyway. Anything you like — except a commissionaire. I absolutely refuse to wear uniform again.

JAMES. How would you like to come into the business?

PHILIP. The jam business? Well, I don't know. You wouldn't want me to salute you in the mornings?

JAMES. My dear boy, no!

PHILIP. All right, I'll try it if you like. I don't know if I shall be any good — what do you do?

JAMES. It's your experience in managing and — er — handling men which I hope will be of value.

PHILIP. Oh, I can do that all right. [*Stretching himself luxuriously*] Uncle James, do you realize that I'm never going to salute again, or wear a uniform, or get wet — really wet, I mean — or examine men's feet, or stand to attention when I'm spoken to, or — oh, lots more things? And best of all, I'm never going to be frightened again. Have you ever known what it is to be afraid — really afraid?

JAMES [*embarrassed*]. I — er — well [*He coughs.*]

PHILIP. No, you couldn't — not really afraid of death, I mean. Well that's over now. Good lord! I could spend the rest of my life in the British Museum and be happy....

JAMES [*getting up*]. All right, we'll try you in the office. I expect you want a holiday first, though.

PHILIP [*getting up*]. My dear uncle, this is holiday. Being in London is holiday. Buying an evening paper — wearing a waistcoat again — running after a bus — anything — it's all holiday.

JAMES. All right, then come along with me now, and I'll introduce you to Mr Bamford.

PHILIP. Right. Who's he?

JAMES. Our manager. A little stiff, but a very good fellow. He'll be delighted to hear that you are coming into the firm.

PHILIP [*smiling*]. Perhaps I'd better bring my revolver, in case he isn't.

JAMES [*laughing with forced heartiness as they go together to the door*]. Ha, ha! A good joke that! Ha, ha, ha, ha! A good joke — but only a joke, of course. Ha, ha! He, he, he!

[PHILIP goes out. James, following him, turns at the door, and looks round the room in a bewildered way. Was it a dream, or wasn't it? He will never be quite certain.]

CURTAIN

A REVIEW

MR A. A. MILNE became a journalist on leaving Cambridge, and was the assistant-editor of *Punch* at the age of twenty-four. On the outbreak of war in 1914 he entered the Army, and it was during his leisure hours as a professional soldier that he first began to write plays. Other subalterns spent their spare time in golf and bridge: Mr Milne's new game was far more exciting.

He began with one-act plays, including "*The Boy Comes Home*," but his reputation as a dramatist rests upon "*Mr Pim Passes By*" and "*The Truth about Blayds*" (especially Act I). His characters are the pleasant people one may meet in a English country house. He excels in dialogue.

It seems natural that a regular contributor to *Punch* should write in a vein of light comedy, and Mr Milne has a delightfully easy touch and a charm which cannot be defined.

This play was written when the author was thirty-four and may be described as light comedy. It is amusing and witty throughout, but that does not necessarily make it a comedy. The ending seems 'right,' and satisfies our wishes because the hero — a real hero — defeats the villain, who happens to be a pompous, bullying uncle. Early in the play we know that the conflict must take place, and we are kept in a state of hope and fear until the climax is reached and passed. If the hero had been bullied into submission the play, however witty or amusing, would not have been classed as a comedy.

The note on the author and the play is acknowledged with thanks to be written by Philips Wayne, the editor of *Modern One-Act Plays*.

BISHOP

LADY REDCHESTER

LORD REDCHESTER

PRESTON

LETTICE

GUY SYDNEY

WOLF

CHARACTERS

Eden Phillips

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

18

SOMETHING TO TALK ABOUT

TIME. — Three o'clock on Christmas morning.

SCENE. *The Library of Tudor Mannor, Redchester.*

Down right is a window with curtains drawn over it. Upon right is a fireplace. To the right of centre is a large safe let into the wall. At centre is a door, while on left stands a table with whisky and soda, glasses and boxes of cigars and cigarettes. There are half a dozen chairs disposed about the room and one or two old family portraits upon the walls. The stage is in darkness when the curtain rises.

After curtain is up a light flashes between the curtains that cover the window. Then one curtain is drawn stealthily back and the 'Wolf' enters. He is clad in tight-fitting, black knickerbockers and has a black cap on his head and a black mask over his eyes. He carries an electric torch in one hand and a bag in the other. He lets the torch travel over the room, finds the safe and deposits the bag beside it. He goes to door, and listens. Leaves door ajar and finds an electric switch by mantelpiece. He turns on an electric light over mantelpiece and looks at his watch. Then he examines safe and opens his bag. He lays out a dozen burglar's tools and a lamp on the carpet. Lamp is connected with wire of a strong electric light. He also brings automatic revolver from the bag and puts it on a chair close to him. He is fumbling at the safe when the Hon. Guy Sydney enters the room. Guy wears pyjamas and slippers. He comes right in, but the burglar does not immediately notice him.

GUY What ho!

WOLF [*Leaping for automatic and pointing it at Guy*] Hands up!

Guy [*Putting up his hands*]. Your're a burglar!

WOLF. What d'you think I was? A piano-tuner? Hands up, I say!

GUY. All right — all right! The real thing, by Jove!

WOLF. I'm the 'Wolf' — so watch out. Sit there, and if you make a sound, I'll plug you.

GUY [*sitting in easy chair*]. My dear chap, we were only saying at dinner that nothing ever happens here. Now something has. D'you really mean you're that world-famous burglar, the 'Wolf'?

WOLF. Yes — I'm him.

GUY. Some Christmas for us — eh? People always say we're the oldest and dullest family in the country. Nothing ever happens to the Sydneys. We never run away with other men's wives, or their money, or anything. We never shine and we never go out — just glimmer century after century. We never get into newspapers, we never even have accidents out hunting. And no burglars, no fires nothing but weddings and funerals. But now all's changed!

WOLF. Why are you here? I'll swear you never heard me.

GUY. Not a sound. Merely a coincidence. Did myself rather well at dinner last night, got thirsty and wanted some soda-water. [*Looks at table.*]

WOLF. Hands up.!

Guy. My dear chap, don't get nasty; don't regard me as an enemy. You're manna in the wilderness — you are indeed. If you only knew how this will brighten our Christmas and make us all up! You've come to 'crack a crib'? That's the technical term, isn't it?

WOLF. D'you know the password of this safe?

GUY. On my honour I don't, or you should be saved all the trouble possible. Only the Governor knows it. He's got the family Christmas presents in that safe. You've come for them, no doubt?

WOLF. I have.

GUY. Well, go to it. He won't miss them. He can't help being enormously rich, you know. His fortune's like your revolver — automatic. Don't be huffy and silly. Let me put my hands down and give you a drink?

WOLF. Any treachery and I'll plug you!

GUY [*getting up*]. My dear Wolf, a Sydney couldn't be treacherous. We're the most trustworthy family in England. Always ran dead straight — always been faithful to King and Country since we fought against William the Conqueror and go downed. Rectitude is our strong suit; that's why we're so dull. This is pre-war whisky; you'll like it [*Mixes whisky and soda-water.*]

WOLF. No too strong.

GUY [*bringing him the drink*]. And you really think you can break into that thing?

WOLF. The safe isn't built to beat me.

GUY. Stout fellow! It's an American contraption. By the way, are you an American crook? They rather specialise in swagger cracksmen over there.

WOLF. It's worth while in the States. When they catch you, if you're bad enough, you go to Sing Sing, and they give you flower gardens and bridge parties and theatricals and concerts and missionaries. They know how to take care of a great crook in America. But I'm English.

GUY. Glad of that. We've got to take a back seat at such a lot of things nowadays. [*Drinks soda-water.*]

WOLF. Don't talk so loud, and shut that door.

GUY [*lighting a cigarette*]. One minute before you begin. Would you mind if I called my sister? This would be such a joy to

her — brighten up her Christmas, you know. Living just outside a cathedral town is slow work for Lettice. You've no idea how she longs for a novelty now and again.

WOLF. If you try to pull my leg — [*picking up revolver*].

GUY. Far from it. The Sydneys never pull people's legs. I'm quite serious. She's a topping girl — quite one of your sort — a Communist and an Anarchist and a Bolshie at heart, though, of course, she's got to hide it. Loves reading about you. You'd be giving a lot of innocent pleasure if you let her see you at work. She's beautiful too, and only twenty-one. You'd like her.

WOLF. I never can say 'no' to beauty.

GUY. Nor can I. It's so commanding.

WOLF. Your word of honour, as a Sydney, that you'll call nobody else?

GUY. My Word of honour. A Sydney can't lie. It's another of our fatal weaknesses and has kept us out of the law and politics and diplomacy — in fact, everything but the Church.

WOLF. Very well. Lettice may come.

GUY. Ta! Don't begin till we're back. The night is still young.

[Exit Guy. Wolf arranges his tools, lights peculiar lamp, turns on electric light — wire not seen — and gets another drink.

He is pouring it out when Preston, the butler, enters in a dressing-gown. Preston carries a poker.

PRESTON. There! I thought I'ear'd something. You dog! [*Advances with poker. The Wolf plunges at him and disarms him. He takes cord off Preston's dressing-gown and ties him into a chair.*

WOLF. A word and I'll plug you!

PRESTON. Plug and be dammed! [*Shouts.*]

Thieves — murd — !

[The WOLF puts his hand over Preston's mouth, drags a large handkerchief from his pocket and gags Preston.]

WOLF. You old, faithful family servants are the devil! I didn't know there were any left.

[Enter Guy and the Hon. Lettice Sydney. She is clad in a fantastic kimono.]

GUY [introducing her]. My sister, Lettice — the famous Wolf, Kid. He's come for the Governor's Christmas presents.

LETTICE. Oh! How brave of him! How thrilling! How d'you do? [Shakes hands.] Do you think you can manage it? [Looks at safe.]

GUY. Why, here's dear old Preston! What on earth did you want to butt in for, old boy? May I set him free, Wolf? He'll be quite now. He's only our butler.

LETTICE. I'm sure he thought he was doing his duty. He's old-fashioned and prejudiced about the division of property.

WOLF. Your sort divide property one way, I'm out to divide it another.

LETTICE. Exactly — quite right, Wolf. What wonderful tools! Is this a jemmy? [Wolf explains them.]

GUY [liberating Preston.] 'Better have a drink and go to bed, old son. This is the famous 'Wolf'; all the police in England are after him. And he's chosen us! Isn't it sporting?

PRESTON. He's come to rob the safe!

GUY. I know — the courage of the beggar! I wish I had a nerve like that.

PRESTON. His Lordship —

LETTICE. Don't worry papa. He'll hear all about it tomorrow. It'll be the Christmas of his life!

WOLF. If you don't let me get on with it, I'll plug the lot of you.

LETTICE. That's quite all right, Wolf. Get on with it by all means. Be quiet, Preston; if you won't go to bed, sit down and watch. This is the crowning point of our existence, if you could only see it. Nothing so wonderful ever happened before at the Manor.

PRESTON. It's a nightmare! I'll wake up soon, I ope.

WOLF. You'll wake up in hell, if you don't shut your mouth. *[Picking up revolver.]*

GUY. You mustn't plug Preston. He'd die for us.

WOLF. Any more talk and he will. *[To Lettice]* You haven't got the password?

LETTICE. I wish I had. Only papa knows it.

GUY. Shall I ask him?

LETTICE. No, no. I want to see the Wolf use these wonderful tools.

WOLF. I shall cut a hole in the cold steel.

PRESTON. You can't — it's crook-proof, you un'oly rip!

LETTICE. Order, Preston.

WOLF. More light — I want more light.

GUY. Right-o! *[Switches on a blaze of electric light. The Wolf gets to work.]*

LETTICE. It's well worthwhile, Wolf. Papa's presents are priceless. He always lets himself go at Christmas.

PRESTON. This'll kill his lordship.

LETTICE. Don't be sentimental, Preston. Papa —

PRESTON. Thank God! Here he is!

[Enter Lord Redchester. He wears a scarlet dressing-gown and a red silk nightcap. He is a jolly and jovial old man.]

LORD R. Good powers, Guy! And you, Lettice!

What have we here! Who the deuce is this?

GUY. It's the Wolf, Governor, the world-famous burglar all England is talking about!

LORD R. The Wolf come to our little place! Surely not. Some impostor pretending to be the wolf.

WOLF. I'm the Wolf all right.

LORD R. By Jove, you look as though you might be. A tough, dauntless devil I'll wager. Glad to know you. I'm Lord Redchester. [*shakes hands.*]

LETTICE. And he's come to steal all your Christmas presents, papa — isn't it astounding of him?

LORD R. How did he hear of'em?

WOLF. I have a thousand secret channels of information.

LORD R. Not Preston! Never old Preston?

PRESTON. Oh, my Gord!

LORD R. A joke, my dear fellow. I'm sure it wasn't you. The Wolf, eh? And come to steal my Christmas gifts. Amazing!

WOLF [*with revolver*]. The password, and quick about it, or I'll plug you! I can't mess about here all night.

LETTICE [*taking revolver from him, laughing*]. No, no, Wolf, that's not playing the game. If you're the real Wolf, I'm sure you'll soon break open the safe with your beautiful tools. You must think of us a little. Be sporting about it.

WOLF. Well — if you put it that way —

LORD R. Does he claim that he can open this safe without the password?

LETTICE [*putting the revolver on the mantelpiece*]. I'm sure he can, papa. There's no safe in the world he can't open.

LORD R. Marvellous! Something to talk about at last! The cigars, Preston.

[Preston fetches box of cigars from table.]

LORD R. Take your time. This is the most interesting thing that has happened in my family since our third kennel-man ran away with my great aunt, Alicia. And that's two hundred years ago!

WOLF [taking a cigar]. A Corona?

LORD R. [helping himself]. A double Corona, my dear fellow.

WOLF. If there's a catch in this, I'll plug the lot—

GUY. My dear Wolf, there's never a catch in anything the Sydneys do.

WOLF [looking at cigar]. Not doped?

LORD R. My tobacco doped! D'you hear that, Preston? [To Wolf.] It may amuse you to know that cigar cost half a guinea.

WOLF. A light, Preston.

[Preston gives him light.]

LETTICE. Do you think I might wake mama? She'll never forgive us if she misses this. You know how she is always yearning for something to happen. It will be cruel, papa, to enjoy the Wolf without her.

LORD R. Thoughtful girl! Call your mother at once. And tell her to put on her thickest dressing gown and a shawl.

[Exit Lettice.]

LORD R. [to the Wolf]. I suppose you seldom have an appreciative audience on these occasions? If you could only do your astounding feats publicly, you'd make a fortune.

WOLF. I've made a fortune all right.

LORD R. No doubt, no doubt. Just going on for the sake of the sport. No sport. If I excelled at anything, which I don't, I should hate to give it up.

WOLF. What's this little lot worth?

[Points to safe.]

LORD R. Say eight thousand.

WOLF. Good!

GUY *[examining tools]*. All the best steel — eh?

WOLF. Only use the best.

LORD R. Quite right. I always say 'the best is good enough for me.'

GUY. Where shall you cut the hole?

WOLF. I cut the hole with my oxyhydrogen blowpipe — here.

[Chalks a round in safe.]

GUY. Nothing we can do to help you?

WOLF. No. I work single-handed. If you'll just sit down out of the way! And no larks, mind.

GUY. Chairs, Preston.

[PRESTON fetches chairs and arranges them in a semi-circle.]

PRESTON. I'ope you'll excuse me, my lord. If this is a entertainment, I'll go and put on my clothes.

LORD R. Do, Preston. I don't like you in negligence — seems unnatural. But not a word to a soul, mind. Don't wake anybody.

PRESTON *[aside]*. Oh, my Gord! — and Chirstmas morning and all!

[Exit Preston. The Wolf begins to work.]

LORD R. Preston has no feeling for romance — his only fault.

WOLF. *[mopping his forehead]*. A spot of whisky.

[Guy gives it to him.]

LORD R. That's right. Catch the spirit of the season. I never thought I should enjoy a Christmas as much as this. If anybody had said there was a novelty in store for the Sydneys I shouldn't have believed them.

GUY. The Governor has an almost morbid craving for a bit of fun, you know.

WOLF. Has he? Well, some people are easily amused.

[Enter Lettice and Lady Redchester. Her ladyship wears a showy cap and dressing-gown. She might have a boa round her neck and possibly a pair of woollen gloves. She carries a lorgnette.]

LADY R. My dear Redchester, is it true?

LORD R. Look at him!

LADY R. *[examining Wolf]*. The terror of England! And under our roof! How nice of him! How do you do?

GUY. He's showing us how he does.

WOLF. And I'd do a darned sight better if there wasn't so much talk. Sit down and stow it.

LORD R. Hush, everybody!

LETTICE. Let's sing to him gently — a Christmas carol. 'Good King Wenceslas', papa.

[They sing.]

WOLF. Shut down on that! Silence, please.

LORD R. *[aside to LADY R.]*. Called for my Christmas presents.

LADY R. A new sort of Santa Claus.

LORD R. *[laughing loudly]*. Good, Sophy, good.

Did you hear that, Wolf? Yor're a new sort of Santa Claus!

[They laugh.]

WOLF. As long as you're all pleased. Where's my automatic?

LETTICE. Here it is. I put it on the mantelpiece.

[Gives it to him.]

GUY. Never like it far from your hand, I expect?

WOLF. Now this light will go through cold steel as though it were butter.

LADY R. Take care, then, and don't burn yourself.

LETTICE. I'll give you first aid if you do.

LADY R. One minute — how Charles would love this! He's so interested in the criminal classes.

WOLF. There ain't no criminal classes, any more than virtuous classes. The rogues and the rulers may both come from the gutter, or the Palace. A man can be in the House of Commons to-day and the House of Detention to-morrow, can't he?

LADY R. Yo're a great thinker, I see. But do let Charles come.

WOLF. Who's Charles? This ain't a music hall turn, you know.

LORD R. You needn't mind Charles. Only my brother — quite harmless. The Bishop of Redchester as a matter of fact.

WOLF. I don't like the clergy.

LADY R. More does he — finds them most difficult and lawless.

LETTICE. You'll love Uncle Charles — everybody does. Call him, Guy. He may not approve, but he won't criticise. He never criticises anybody; and never does anything, but just sits on the fence and prays for everybody.

GUY. He'll hate losing Christmas present.

LORD R. By Jove, he will! But it doesn't matter a button. I'll get him another. His life's so monotonous. It will be something for him to talk to the Dean and Chapter about.

GUY. Right-o!

[Exit Guy.]

WOLF [*who has been working blow-pipe*]. You see the solid steel is yielding under the terrific heat of the oxyhydrogen.

LORD R. Famous! So it is! I must get one — might be useful. Where d'you buy 'em?

WOLF. A professional secret; but I dare say I could send you one anonymously.

LORD R. Do, my dear fellow.

LETTICE [*to Lady R.*]. An enemy of society, mama, a bitter, sleepless enemy of society.

LADY R. Quite right — if he really knows what society is.

WOLF. Ah! I'm up against something new here!

[*They all bend forward.*]

LORD R. [*springing up*] Eh! Another novelty? Some American Invention, I expect. Don't let it beat you!

WOLF. Sit down — and stop dancing about.

There's too much fuss here. [*He is worried and examines safe.*]

LORD R. Sorry. [*Returns to seat.*] Anxious work — eh? Want your wits about you. I never had any myself, but I respect you brainy fellows tremendously.

[*Entry Guy and the Bishop of Redchester. The latter wears a purple dressing-gown and a black biretta on his head. He looks distinctly clerical.*]

LETTICE. The famous Wolf, Uncle Charles.

LORD R. The Wolf has honoured our little fold, Charles! Think of his finding out Tudor Manor!

BISHOP. And why — why has this notorious person found out Tudor Manor?

WOLF [*at safe, worried*]. Why d'you think? To ask for a blessing?

BISHOP. I will bless you if you desire it; but not while you endeavour to destroy Lord Redchester's new family safe and steal his family gifts.

WOLF [*taking his revolver*]. Cut it out. Any more back answers and I'll plug you.

LORD R. Don't worry him, Charles. He's got his hands full.

WOLF [*back at safe*]. One of these damned Yankee puzzle-boxes that make you wish Columbus had never been born.

LADY R. You're not accustomed to an audience, of course.

WOLF. I'll have an audience of 'stiffs' if you don't dry up.

BISHOP. May I speak?

WOLF. No! Shut your face!

LADY R. Be quiet, Charles.

BISHOP. I'll be quiet till he's finished. Then, a lost sheep, it will be my duty to save him.

LETTICE. A lost sheep in wolf's clothing!

WOLF. 'Wolves do change their hair, but not their hearts.'

BISHOP. A classical quotation! you have known happier days, my poor fellow.

WOLF. Yes, and happier nights.

LORD R. Don't say that. Wait till you collar the swag. [*To the rest.*] He's got a grand haul, you know, I'd bought a magnificent jade necklace for you, Sophy.

LADY R. You darling!

LORD R. A diamond tiara for Lettice — the one you admired in Bond Street, my treasure.

LETTICE. Oh! You angel, papa!

LORD R. A gold cigarette case for Guy — with a cheque in it.

GUY. You brick, Governor!

LORD R. And a new crosier for Charles — an episcopal crook — not your sort of crook, Wolf. A magnificent crosier set with astounding jewels. You'll love it.

BISHOP. My dear fellow! How did you guess? You never come to the cathedral. But it is true, the Redchester crosier is quite unworthy of us. I much want a handsome one for great occasions.

WOLF [*who has been working and failing*]. This infernal thing beats me! I can't get in! It's a new metal. The oxyhydrogen won't touch it!

LADY R. Oh dear!

GUY. 'If at first you can't succeed —'

[*The Wolf stands back and stares at the safe.*]

LETTICE. He's tried so hard, papa. It'll ruin his Christmas if he fails.

WOLF. A new metal, I tell you — a dirty Yankee trick! Blast the States, that's what I say. Why couldn't you be patriotic and buy an English safe?

LORD R. To tell you the truth I felt doubtful at the time. We stick to home-made things as a rule, though they are so inferior.

LADY R. Tell him the password, Redchester. He's done his best. We don't want to ruin his Christmas.

BISHOP. Make him promise not to take the crosier!

LETTICE. No, that's not fair, Uncle Charles. The Wolf always makes a clean sweep. That's what he's here for.

WOLF [*takes up revolver*]. Just so. A clean sweep I make. The password quick, or I plug you all! [*Whirls revolver.*]

LORD R. Don't spoil it — don't be rude and violent! Put that thing down. I'd always intended to give you the password if you failed. Be bright, be sensible. Remember the day! The password is 'Sophy.'

LADY R. Always thinking of me!

[The WOLF goes to safe and in a moment has it open.]

[Enter Preston dressed as butler.]

PRESTON. Is there anything your lordship is pleased to want?

WOLF. A sack for the swag, Preston. All stand back if you value your lives!

LORD R. A cricket bag will be better — easier to carry. One of the cricket bags, Preston.

[Preston lifts his eyes to the ceiling and goes off.]

WOLF. Now I'll see if you were talking through your hat.

GUY. My dear chap, a Sydney never talks through his hat.

WOLF. I'll see. *[Brings out a parcel from safe.]*

LORD R. That was to have been Lady Redchester's Christmas gift.

[WOLF opens jewel-case and reveals a jade necklace with enormous beads as big as plover's eggs.]

LADY R. Redchester! How glorious! I didn't know there was such a jade necklace in the world.

WOLF. More did I!

LORD R. There isn't another! It belonged to the late Empress of China. I sent to China for it.

LETTICE. Do let mama just try it on, Wolf. They'd go so beautifully with her pink dressing gown.

LADY R. Yes — yes — let me throw them round my neck for a moment, a dear Wolf.

WOLF. No tricks, mind. [*Gives necklace to Lettice, who puts them round Lady Redchester's throat.*] Any foul play and I'll plug her ladyship.

LORD R. You mustn't do that. Keep calm. You're among friends. Believe me, you can trust her.

[*They all applaud the necklace.*]

BISHOP. Magnificent, Sophy! You set them off superbly.

LORD R. [*delighted*]. One of my successes — eh?

WOLF. They make her look younger.

LADY R. They do — I feel they do!

WOLF. And they make me feel younger. Worth a thousand, I'll bet.

LORD R., More, my boy, more!

[*The Wolf fetches out another large jewel-case from the safe.*]

LETTICE. It's like dipping into a bran tub, isn't it, Wolf?

LORD R. That's the tiara, Lettice.

[*PRESTON returns with a cricket bag.*]

BISHOP [*aside to Preston*]. He proposes to take everything, Preston — the new episcopal crosier and everything!

PRESTON. Who'll take him? That's what I want to know.

LETTICE [*on seeing the tiara, which is a gorgeous affair of glittering diamonds, kisses Lord R.*] Oh, papa how heavenly of you!

BISHOP [*to Wolf*]. Does not this innocent maiden's happiness touch you?

WOLF. Cut it out. I'm here to do the touching.

LADY R. Let her try it on, Wolf — just once.

LETTICE. Do let me, Wolf — only for a moment.

WOLF [*giving her the tiara*]. Be quick, then. Can't stop here playing about all night. What's the time, Preston?

PRESTON [*consulting watch*]. Half after five.

GUY. There's no workmen's trains this morning. But perhaps you've ordered a 'special'?

WOLF. You watch out, my lad! Any more sauce and I'll plug you. I come and go on a motor bike.

GUY. Of course — you would. Rather bad roads, I'm afraid.

WOLF. You're right. Worst roads in England.

BISHOP [*who has helped Lady Redchester to put on Lettice's tiara*]. Exquisite! Amazing gems. What fire! What lustre!

LETTICE. Do you like it, Wolf?

WOLF. A touch to the left — that's right. Pretty tidy shiners. You can wear 'em for five minutes, then I'm off. Now for another dip.

LADY R. The iron nerve of the man!

LORD R. Isn't he wonderful? Napoleonic, Sophy!

BISHOP [*to Lady R.*] One feels there ought to be some way of circumventing him.

LADY R. Nobody has ever been known to circumvent the Wolf, Charles.

LORD R. [*as Wolf reveals an absurdly large, golden cigarette case.*] That's right; that is Guy's cigarette case.

GUY. My dear Governor! What a dainty little masterpiece!

LETTICE. Why! I could pack a dress in that, papa!

LORD R. Don't forget the cheque.

WOLF [*opening case and looking at cheque*]. A thousand quid — eh? What a father! If I'd had a father like that — I might have been a very different man.

LORD R. But not so wonderful.

BISHOP. It's never too late to mend. Make a beginning to-night.

GUY. Let me have a squint at it. Cheques no good to you anyway.

[Takes cigarette case.]

WOLF. It will be when you've signed it. A pen and ink, Preston. No tricks, mind — or —

[Preston goes off.]

GUY [examining cigarette case]. The arms and crest and motto and everything!

WOLF. Got a motto, have you?

BISHOP. The family motto. 'Nec elata, nec dejecta,' which means, 'Neither elated nor cast down.'

WOLF. Well, if you ain't cast down after this morning's work, I'll forgive you. It's a soft job like this that makes my life worthwhile.

LADY R. So glad!

WOLF [going to safe]. What's this? [Brings out a long case.] A fishing rod?

LORD R. The crosier — allow me. [Takes case, opens it and brings out a wonderful, golden, Bishop's crook. It is very large and studded with enormous gems. He gives it to the Bishop.]

LADY R. It suits you exactly, Charles! It might have been made for you.

LORD R. It was.

LETTICE. Gold always suits Uncle Charles.

WOLF. A flashy bit, sure enough. Real stones? Real gold?

LORD R. Would a Sydney give his Bishop brother sham ones, think you?

[Preston returns with pen, ink and blotting-paper. He puts them on the table beside whisky and soda.]

LETTICE. Oh, Preston, just look at Uncle Charles!

Preston [to WOLF]. Don't that make you want to go on your knees, you bad man?

WOLF. Sign that cheque, Guy, right now. Then one more drink and I'm off. Now ladies, please.

LADY R. One moment, my dear, good Wolf. You know I can't help feeling a *wee* bit of sentiment about his necklace. I'm an old woman and may not live to enjoy another Christmas such as this. I feel such wonderful things can never happen again. And if the necklace goes, it's all spoiled. [Guy gives the Wolf a drink.] If you take it away from me, you'll look back on this happy morning and feel — oh so sorry — so full of remorse!

LORD R. [to Wolf]. I was afraid she'd begin to worry when it came to the point.

WOLF. Business is business.

LADY R. Then forget all about business for once. If you take my necklace, you'll look back and feel that you'd let business come before pleasure; and that's always such a silly thing to do. You had a mother once —

LORD R. And a clever one —

WOLF. Not a word against my mother!

LADY R. Indeed, no. She must have been a proud woman. But think if somebody had stolen her jade necklace — if you had seen tears in her old eyes on Christmas morning. Relent, dear, Wolf — for your mother's sake, let me keep the necklace.

WOLF. Cut it out! The necklace — or — [revolver].

LADY R. [taking it off]. Well, I call it simply horrid of you. The papers say you are always nice to ladies — even old ones.

WOLF [*taking necklace and putting it in cricket bag*]. Ain't I been nice? Dammy, you people don't know your luck. You might have been lying dead in a row — if it weren't Christmas morning.

GUY. By Jove — so we might!

LORD R. A terrific experience!

WOLF. The tiara, Lettice, and no more soft soap, please. It don't cut no ice with me.

LETTICE. Yes the tiara. But do think twice about the tiara, Wolf. You don't really want it, do you? [*putting her arms round his shoulders.*] No nice man even wears diamonds. So yield, just this once, and make me a friend for life. Do let me keep them.

BISHOP. A true and lifelong friend is better than diamonds.

LETTICE. Yes and Uncle Charles's crosier is so much more in your line. If I was your daughter — just think — you'd love me to wear a tiara then.

LADY R. I expect he has a horrid, greedy daughter like himself.

WOLF. I've got to work for my wife and family, ain't I! Work's work.

LETTICE. But not to-day. Not on Christmas morning! Everyone takes a holiday to-day. Do be Christmassy and kind-hearted, and then you'll feel so happy and pleased with yourself.

BISHOP. I dare say he has a heart of gold really.

WOLF. Cut it out!

PRESTON [*aside*]. I wish I could, you devil!

LORD R. Order, Preston!

LETTICE. Let me owe my Christmas rejoicings entirely to you! And when I hear you rob other people, then I'll always stick up for you and say they deserved it.

BISHOP. A good act is never forgotten — it never dies. What, after all, are these treasures, my poor Wolf, compared with those you might win if you reform and join the ranks of the trustworthy, honourable and virtuous? Let this glad Anniversary —

WOLF. Stow it! [To Lettice] D'you want me to abandon my craft and start keeping rabbit?

GUY. Have some of ours. We've got millions.

WOLF. The tiara, or I'll take it.

LETTICE [giving it to him]. You're a cad — that's what you are — an utter bounder! I hate you!

WOLF [putting tiara in cricket bag]. And not the only one, my lady bird.

LADY R. What are all you men about to see us robbed in this way?

LORD R. My dear Sophy, where's your sense of humour? A terrific experience — the event of a lifetime. Do try to appreciate it!

WOLF. The gold portmanteau, Guy.

GUY. All right — all right. [Hands it over]. Let me keep the cheque — for luck — eh?

WOLF. The cheque, too — and if it's stopped, I come back and plug the family.

[GUY hands over the cheque.]

LORD R. Well worth the money — marvellous — Napoleonic!

WOLF. And now the crosier, Bishop. It'll be morning before I hop it.

BISHOP. It is the morning, my dear fellow. Hark! What do I hear? Open the window, Preston.

[Preston draws curtains and throws open the window. A dim, white light. Bells are heard faintly chiming in the distance.]

LADY R. The dear old cathedral bells.

LETTICE. Ringing in dear old Christmas morning! Bishop. Again the glad tidings of peace and goodwill to man are whispering in our ears. Again we lift up our hearts and renew our faith and trust, both in heaven and our fellow creatures. Again the message of love, charity, benevolence comes to us with the gracious Christmas dawn — to tell us of the beauty of self-denial, of the well-laden board and generous vintage, of good gifts — taken and given — of —

WOLF. The crook, and look slippy!

BISHOP. The Christmas bells, Wolf.

WOLF. The Christmas bells, Bishop. I've got an expensive family and rather expensive tastes myself, I may tell you. *[Takes crosier and puts it into cricket bag.]*

LARD R. *[delighted, to Lady R.]* Too much, even for Charles.

LADY R. *[to BISHOP]*. Can nothing be done?

BISHOP. Yes, I have a trump card up my sleeve.

LADY R. Play it, then, for goodness sake!

BISHOP. Don't strap up that bag for a moment. Listen to me you might do much better than that — much better, I'm sure your conscience will always prick you if you take those trifles when you might secure a huge fortune instead.

WOLF. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, old top!

BISHOP. My dear friend, I know a bush with a magnificent bird in it, which you could secure with no trouble whatever.

WOLF *[to Preston]*. Pack up my hand-bag, Preston.

[PRESTON collects tools and lamp from floor and puts them in the Wolf's bag.]

WOLF [to Bishop]. My turkey's waiting for me at home.

BISHOP. But what about a turkey worth half a million?

WOLF. Where? [*Takes another cigar.*]

BISHOP. He is now our next door neighbour and has just secured a Tudor mansion and enormous estate, three miles from here. Our dear old cathedral is tumbling down and I have invited Lord Wallaby to rebuild it. He absolutely declines to do so, and now Providence has evidently sent you to punish him for his impiety. He is worth ten millions, and being a vulgar creature, very fond of display, he exhibits a part of this wealth in a service of astounding gold plate on his dining-room sideboard. It is said to be worth two hundred thousand pounds. Then, in his drawing-room, there stands a cabinet containing five hundred small, quite portable pieces of old china, each worth over a thousand pounds.

WOLF. Now you're talking.

BISHOP. I am. We are acquainted with the Wallabys. We knew the place quite well before their time — decent people lived there once.

GUY. I know it inside out. There's a little window on the right side of the main entrance you could walk through.

BISHOP. The grand point is this. The Wallabys are newcomers — just settling in — and people just settling into a new house never think of burglars.

WOLF. That's right. You might be one of us yourself.

LORD R. The Wallabys dine with us to-night. Wallaby can never eat anything that isn't cooked by a French chef, and his has run away, so we take pity on the man and he's coming to try ours.

WOLF. Coming here to-night?

BISHOP. Exactly. The whole family. And the servants all live at the other end of the mansion, and they will be keeping

Christmas, you understand. From eight till eleven the place is at your mercy.

WOLF. Sounds good enough.

LADY R. Quite! And then, instead of a mere few thousand pounds, you will make very likely a hundred thousand.

BISHOP. More. With his incomparable skill and audacity, he will do far better than that. [*To the Wolf.*] But you see the position, of course? If you take the contents of that cricket bag, we shall tell Lord Wallaby immediately after breakfast that you have done so. Then he will make the necessary preparations and the opportunity of a lifetime is lost. But if you prefer these trifling mementoes to the priceless Wallaby collection you will not be the wonderful man I take you for.

GUY. We would lend you our touring car to get the booty to town.

WOLF. Thanks; but I'll make my own arrangements. Not a whisper to the Wallaby, mind.

LORD R. The word of a Sydney, my dear fellow. Not a whisper!

WOLF. Right ho! It's good enough. I trust you. [*Opening bag.*] Here you are, girls! Here's your 'hold-all,' Guy; and there's the Bishop's little lot. And mind this: break faith and I come back and plug — [*Holds all the presents.*]

GUY. We couldn't break faith, my dear chap. The Sydneys are faithful unto death.

WOLF. My Christmas presents — see? [*Gives the presents back.*]

LADY R. He was dear Santa Claus, after all!

[*She and Lettice put on the jewels. Bishop. bows and regains his crosier.*]

WOLF. I shan't want the cricket bag, Preston. [*To Lord R.*] Here's a keepsake for you, too — my automatic. It isn't loaded.

LORD R. My dear fellow — a noble curio! An heirloom! But I'm robbing you?

WOLF. I've got plenty more. So long then. To-night, mind. And don't you let the Wallabys hop home again till after eleven o'clock. Keep 'em here.

LETTICE. We will.

GUY. Remember. The little window beside the main entrance — left to the portico, behind a holly bush. Then through the hall and the old armour and stuff to dining-room for gold plate — third door on left — and drawing-room for curious in cabinet beside the fireplace — second door on right.

WOLF [*making a note*]. Right-o! That lets me out then.

[*Goes to window.*]

LORD R. A ladder, Preston.

WOLF. Cat burglars don't want ladders. [*Half out of window.*]

LADY R. [*shaking hands.*] Good-bye. We shall never forget you.

LETTICE. [*shaking hands.*] Good-bye, dear Wolf! Do take care of yourself!

GUY [*shaking hands.*] Call at the Sports Club some day and let me put you up for membership.

BISHOP. [*shaking hands.*] Come to the cathedral when you are at leisure. You really ought to turn over a new leaf to-night.

WOLF. And don't none of you say no more hard words of the Wolf.

[*Sinks out of sight.*] They look out of the window. All. We won't! We won't [*Looking out of window.*] A merry Christmas!

WOLF [*outside*]. And a 'appy New Year!

LORD R. [*to Preston.*] Run out and see he has petrol for his machine and anything else he may need, Preston.

PRESTON. My Lord!

LORD R. At once, Preston, or I'll plug you!

[Exit Preston. Lady Redchester comes back from window.]

LETTICE [waves her hand out of window, then comes in]. He's gone, papa!

BISHOP. Thus we see how Providence never forgets the Sydneys.

LORD R. Grand fellow! Something to talk about at last!

CURTAIN

A REVIEW

This play has been included chiefly because it is a clever and pleasant representation of the temperament of a modern English people, who might well find nocturnal alarm a matter of objective entertainment. I have heard critics question Mr. Phillipotts's handling of this burglar episode as hardly credible and in any case long drawn out. On the first point depends the whole worth of the play. It seems to me the reward of good breeding that its owners possess themselves without flaws or tremors when faced with the unexpected. Young Sydney is the first to come across the "Wolf" and it does not occur to him to lose his balance. The others follow suit: they find the burglar a genuinely, interesting novelty. The comedy lies mainly in 'the tables turned': it is the burglar who meets with the unexpected, and we enjoy his bewilderment at being treated with such genuine politeness. Possibly the play could be shorter without heavy loss: but the thing is a pleasantly dramatised episode, and can be played with conviction if only the Sydney family achieve the difficult task of domestic case on the stage. Visible exaggeration will, as ever, damage the presentation irreparably: the older characters are pitfalls for the amateur in this respect. Your 'character' actors can make them monstrous, whereas they are only older examples of the well-bred family.

Mr. Phillipotts, like his younger fellow-dramatist Mr. Drinkwater, spent some years in the insurance business before he began to write. *The Farmer's Wife* is his most celebrated play; it appeared in 1924 and its happy, sunny wit carried it through a run of over 1300 performances. Mr. Phillipotts, like Mr. Brighouse, has found collaboration congenial. *The Angel in the House* (1915) was written with Mr. B. Macdonald Hastings, and *Yellow Sands* (1933) with Adelaide Phillipotts, our author's daughter.

For forty years Mr. Phillipotts has been delighting his readers with the lively performances of his muse. He can tell an excellent story, and in all he does, we feel the constant humour of genuine and kindly observer of mankind.

The note on the author and the play is acknowledged with thanks to be written by J. W. Marriot, The editor of *One-Act Plays of Today*.

SMOKE-SCREENS

Herold Brighthouse

CHARACTERS

PRIMROSE ASTON

SUSAN MERRIDEW, her Aunt.

LUCY ASTON, her Mother

CLARICE, her Friend.

TIME. — The present.

19

SMOKE-SCREENS

Scene — MRS. ASTON'S sitting-room in a Kensington flat. It is woman's room, exhibiting no sign of masculine use, but, of course, that old theory that women don't care about comfort of themselves, but only for men, is thoroughly out of date. This is a comfortable, bright, lived-in room, furnished in charming good taste by a woman who, if not precisely wealthy, has not had to watch pennies when she decorated her sitting-room. The door is c., with a hall-backing behind it. The window is R., with curtains drawn. It isn't a bookish room and the contents of the bookcase, R.G., are obviously novels, and not enough of them to fill the shelves. A table, down R., has 'Vogue' and 'The Tatler,' together with cigarette-box, ash-trays and match-holders. The principal furnishing of the L. wall is a cabinet gramophone and a small occasional table with a vase of flowers. A large settee is set diagonally down stage from l. below the gramophone to c. There are upholstered chairs with bright covers, and a pouf which is down C. The walls are modern, and, as modern painters know to their cost, modern walls don't call for pictures. The sconces of the electric lights are decorative on the walls; a standard-lamp helps, by its shade, to decorate the room. There is a mirror on the wall L.C.

As the CURTAIN rises, Susan, who is 50, selects a record and starts 'The Ride of the Valkyrie' on the gramophone. Then she goes to the bookcase, looking for a novel, inspecting one or two title-pages. The door opens violently, and it isn't closed, either, after Primrose, who — she's 20 — dashes in with her cloak on and begins a vehement search of the room. Susan's action might excite suspicion, though it doesn't. She turns off the gramophone and reaches a chair with evident relief, taking a novel with her.

PRIMROSE. You needn't turn that off for me.

SUSAN. You're giving so good an imitation of a wind-maiden yourself that —

PRIMROSE. Never mind, Aunt Susan. I'll be out in a minute. At least, I will if I can find that bag of mine. It's got my one and only lipstick in it.

SUSAN. [*in armchair L. of the table*]. You couldn't go out without that. [*As Primrose's back is conveniently turned she here exhibits the bag, then hides it again.*]

PRIMROSE. Go out naked? No, you may not think it, my dear, but I do pay some attention to the respectabilities. [*C. surveying the room.*] Oh, where is that —? [*She pauses, as if planning a campaign of search, and we notice her, in kindness to Susan, shutting her mouth tightly on a flow of very lively oaths.*]

SUSAN. You're out a great deal, Primrose.

PRIMROSE. Yes, I use London. [*Moving about, upending settee cushions in her search.*] Can't imagine how you can come up from the country and sit still when you get here. You can read novels at Little Crampton.

SUSAN. I've slight headache this evening.

PRIMROSE [*casually*]. Sorry.

SUSAN. You're not very sympathetic, my dear.

PRIMROSE. Personally I think minor ailments are the only true impropriety.

SUSAN. I should like a chance to talk to you. Couldn't you, now —

PRIMROSE. I'm afraid this isn't my evening for listening to the conversation of my aunt.

SUSAN [*suavely*]. We might make an appointment

PRIMROSE. For what?

SUSAN. For our talk. Some time when your engagements permit. Could you suggest a convenient date?

PRIMROSE. I couldn't at the moment.

SUSAN. Won't you indulge me? I very much want just half an hour alone with you.

[PRIMROSE interrupts her search and sits down on the R. arm of the settee, looking down at Susan, dominating her.]

PRIMROSE. I know you do. You've been here for a week, now, haven't you?

SUSAN. Yes.

PRIMROSE. You had about two looks at me, gasped in horror, and ever since you've been manoeuvring for a chance to tell me what you think about me. Am I right?

SUSAN. You're not absolutely wrong.

PRIMROSE [rising]. All right, Aunt. You shall have your talk. Not now —

SUSAN. Why not now?

PRIMROSE [C.] Some time before you go home you can unleash your views of me. But not now. Not till I know you've thought over something I'm going to tell you.

SUSAN. Yes?

PRIMROSE. It isn't it isn't particularly easy to be me. That's all, if you'll just think that over before we discuss my young life. [She crosses to cigarette-box on table R and lights a cigarette.] Putrid things, these cigarettes of Mother's. They cost a fortune, and taste like all the sins of Asia.

SUSAN. Is that why you smoke them?

PRIMROSE. I must smoke something, mustn't I? Don't say you don't see the necessity. It's crude. I'm smoking this, my dear, because I've a packet of Player's in my bag and my bag's vanished.

[Lucy enters, closing the door. She is 40, handsome, capable.

Have you seen it, Lucy? My bag.

LUCY. No.

PRIMROSE. Oh, gosh, I shall throw a temperament in a minute!

SUSAN. Will that find your bag?

PRIMROSE. It might explode something. My bag might be found in the ruins. you never know.

LUCY. [sitting on downstage end of settee]. You do lose things, Primrose. I don't suppose you've noticed, but the habit of dropping things about is growing on you.

PRIMROSE [startled]. Is that true? Really?

LUCY. It seems to worry you.

PRIMROSE [C.]. Well, it indicates a state of mind. I mean, a girl can lose her reputation, and no harm's done.

SUSAN [outraged]. Oh, Primrose!

PRIMROSE. See Shakespeare on reputations, Aunt. Blowing bubbles. But losing a handbag's serious. All my girlish secrets are in that bag, and about three pounds cash. [She moves up as if to recommence her search.]

SUSAN. Then you'd better stay at home till you find it.

PRIMROSE. Oh? [She turns and looks at Susan, whose self-consciousness is revealing.] Oh, that's where it is! My dear Aunt Susan, you do have bright ideas. [To her.] Will you get up, or must I spill you on the floor?

[Susan produces the bag. Primrose, still retaining her cigarette, uses the lipstick.

Thank you. Thank you for striking this blow for decency. Now your well-loved niece need not go naked into the night with lips exposed to the bitter blast and the scandalised eyes of men.

[She goes up to the door and puts the cigarette in her mouth to free her hand to open it.]

LUCY. Need you go into the street smoking?

SUSAN. For heaven's sake, child, throw it away! You've said you didn't like it. *[She rises and goes up to her as if to wrest it from her.]*

PRIMROSE *[coolly ignoring Susan]*. One of yours, Lucy. It tastes like the morning after a bad, bad night in Port Said, but the Government's told us to be economical. It isn't economy to throw away a half-used cigarette. Don't wait up for me. *[Going, then over her shoulder.]* A latchkey's one of the contents of a handbag, Aunt Susan.

[She goes out.]

SUSAN *[returning to her chair and sitting before speaking]*.

Is she never at home?

LUCY. Not often. *[She rises and crosses to cigarette box on table R.]*

SUSAN. I told her I'd a headache.

LUCY *[pausing before lighting a cigarette]*. Have you a headache?

SUSAN. No. *[So Lucy lights up.]* But I thought she might offer to stay in if I said I had.

LUCY. Really? Have you noticed much of that angel-child stuff lately? *[She stands against the table R., looking down on Susan.]*

SUSAN. Well, I hope you know where she's going now.

LUCY. You mean she's going to the devil.

SUSAN. I hoped that, as her mother, you'd know which station en route to the devil she's calling at to-night. Some night-club, I expect.

LUCY. I'm not in her confidence. Oh, stop looking complacent, Susan! *[She crushes her cigarette out on the ash-tray.]*

SUSAN. I wasn't.

LUCY. Yes, you were. You're the lucky one. You've a husband you can put up with and two sons who haven't turned your hair grey. That's luck, at fifty.

SUSAN. [*rising and touching Lucy's arm*]. Don't be bitter, my dear.

LUCY. I've only Primrose, and she — [*She makes a gesture of hopelessness and crosses to settee.*]

SUSAN. She's going to let me talk to her.

LUCY. Oh? Oh, try anything once! [*She sits on settee.*] But if she won't heed me I... well, I'd almost prefer she wouldn't heed you.

[*Susan sits by Lucy on the settee. Lucy downstage and Susan upstage end.*]

SUSAN. Sometimes an outsider's view can —

LUCY. Sometimes I try to take an outside view of myself. I've made a mistake. Somewhere there's bad mistake, or Primrose —

SUSAN. She's very young, Lucy.

LUCY. Oh, my dear, I know exactly what you think of her! And of me for having let her become —

SUSAN. Lucy, what I think of you is a bit unusual from one sister to another. I think you're a splendid woman. I think you've fought life like a heroine.

LUCY. Thank you, Susan. That's very sweet to hear. But I don't know. Can anyone fight life — successfully? Life's cunning, and it's underhand, and you fight straight yourself, and you fancy you're doing something about it that's rather fine, but life's — and fights back crooked. Life's fighting back at me — Primrose.

SUSAN. I've got a difficult thing to say, Lucy.

LUCY. Oh, if we can put our finger on my mistake we needn't butter parsnips.

SUSAN. You see; you spoke just now with bitterness.

LUCY. I've cause for bitterness.

SUSAN. Yes, you've cause, and I'll go further. I feel you haven't the habit of bitterness. That's a compliment, Lucy. Still, habits break down sometimes, and what I want to know is this. It arises out of something Primrose said. I tried to speak to Primrose, and she cut me short. She asked if I thought it was easy to be her.

LUCY. Not easy to be her? She's my heiress.

SUSAN. You've done miracles to make her heiress to anything, let alone — [*She looks round the room, indicating there's a lot to be heiress to.*] I suppose she knows everything?

LUCY. She knows I had to divorce her father.

SUSAN. She knows you refused alimony?

LUCY. I'd rather have scrubbed floors.

SUSAN. Oh, you did better than that! What had you but a car that you could drive? And you hired it out and drove it. And fifteen years later you own three garages and I don't know how many taxicabs. You beat the men at a man's own game.

LUCY. It's easy stuff, beating men.

[*Susan rises, goes to the switch by the door and turns the lights out.*]

What are you doing?

SUSAN [*in the dark*]. That's all I know about electricity. Turn a switch, and the lights go out. [*Turning the lights up again.*] Turn it the other way, and the lights go up.

LUCY. Yes? But —

SUSAN. [*coming down c.*] There's an amazing lot of electricity at work in this house. Your kitchen's a sight. You turn

a switch and let electricity do the things that used to make women slaves to household tasks. I think men invented all these gadgets. Men freed you for the career in which you've beaten other men. There's good in men, my dear.

LUCY. But, heavens, Susan, have I ever denied it?

SUSAN. To Primrose?

LUCY. Oh! Are you telling me I let my career bolt with me? I brought up taxi-cabs instead of bringing up my daughter? Is that the idea? Don't forget I had my living and Primrose's living to earn.

SUSAN. You'll admit one thing about Charles.

LUCY. [*rising*]. Charles!

SUSAN. You'll admit he was a charming man.

LUCY. In the opinion of so many women he was.

SUSAN. Including Primrose's opinion?

LUCY. What?

SUSAN. One day it became necessary for you to explain to Primrose why she hadn't got a father round the house, as the other girls at school had.

[*Lucy gestures Susan to sit. Susan sits in armchair R.c., Lucy sits on pouf.*]

LUCY. I'll tell you what I did so, Susan, I remembered from my own schooldays that schoolgirls are spiteful little beasts. So I made the most tactful inquiries, and Primrose went where I knew there were other girls whose parents had divorced. I did that so that she shouldn't feel unusual.

SUSAN. Good for you! But you told her, of course. And this is what I'm getting at. In telling her, did you say Charles was a charming man, if an impossible husband, or did you say that when the split came you loathed him so bitterly that your pride revolted against taking alimony from such a man?

LUCY. I had to justify myself to her. Susan, I had to make her see that mine wasn't one of those casual, light-hearted divorces.

SUSAN. I wonder if it isn't better to keep divorce light-hearted.

LUCY. Oh, the matter with you is you're in the flippant fifties! You're losing your grip on morals. Susan, do you think I've been such a blithering idiot as to have brought my daughter up in the belief that all men are rotters?

SUSAN. In the belief that her father's a rotter — yes, you have, with the consequence that the child asks herself how much of her father's rotten nature has descended to her, and —

LUCY. He was a rotter. Oh, more fool I to have married him, but I'm not the first or the millionth woman to have been made a fool of by love. — And if I was fooled by a rotter, what else was I to tell Primrose except that I was fooled by a rotter?

SUSAN. And what's her reaction to that? My mother's a fool. She let herself be fooled by my father, who's a scoundrel. I'm the offspring of a fool and a scoundrel, and I may as well enjoy myself on the way to the devil, because I'm bound to go there, anyhow.

LUCY [*rising, impatiently*]. I'm a fool, am I? Five minutes ago you said I was a heroine.

SUSAN. Heroines are heroines because they don't see side-issues.

LUCY. Primrose is not a side-issue. She's all I've got. Oh, I was a heroine because I turned out to work for my child, and a fool because I turned out to work for my child! You can't have it both ways, Susan. And I couldn't have it both ways, either. I couldn't be a domestic mother to my daughter while I was running a business.

SUSAN. Tell me this. You haven't raved to her against marriage?

LUCY. Rave? I never rave.

SUSAN. Very likely I don't mean all I say.

LUCY. Then you shouldn't say it. Upsetting me like this!
[*She sits at upstage end of settee.*]

SUSAN. My dear, if a young girl's as rude to her aunt as Primrose was to me you can't blame the aunt for feeling sore.

LUCY. You've got to recognise, Susan, that they don't go in for being mannerly to-day. Each generation has its — its technique. This present lot pretends to be a generation of flinty-hearted gold-diggers, and I expect they are shocking to an aunt from the country with two immaculate sons of her own.

SUSAN. [*quietly*]. If you're satisfied with Primrose, that's the way to treat me — as a meddling busybody.

LUCY [*looking straight out*]. I don't think anybody's satisfied, ever. We want our children to be our own immortality. They want to be themselves. They want to be left alone to be themselves.

SUSAN. Yes? That's philosophy, and soft at that. I've been speaking about an actual niece with a latchkey in her bag and a cigarette in her lips in the public street, and a talent for back-answers that might be in its right place if she were one of your taxi-cab drivers, but as she isn't, as she's nothing but an overdressed minx beyond the age when it's decent to spank her for her good, I'm going to try what a bit of old-fashioned commonsense will do to her. [*Rising, and saying half quizzically.*] For one thing, Lucy, you know what I'm in town for?

LUCY. Well, to visit me.

SUSAN. Yes. with the object of inducing you to leave your money to the International Peace Society.

LUCY. To do what?

SUSAN. It's the greatest cause in the world, and I doubt if you've ever thought of it. [*Seriously.*] I doubt if you've ever thought of using the power of the purse over Primrose.

LUCY. Oh, I see!

SUSAN. Well, have you?

LUCY. Have I thought of dangling my will as a threat over Primrose? No! I haven't thought of doing anything so Victorian.

SUSAN. The Victorians had their points.

LUCY. The Victorians had their parents. Security was going to last for ever, so they treated their children harsh when young because they were going to be rich when old. Fitting children for life's battles by making sure nothing they could meet afterwards could be as hellish as what they'd had to meet in childhood. Nothing's secure to-day, so we let them have the best we can while the going's good. Give our children a better time than we had ourselves, and —

SUSAN. I see. Won't discipline her daughter. Just a beautiful, fatuous trust in the innate goodness of human nature.

LUCY. I've been married to Charles Aston. I've also established a business, and I met a lot of human nature while I was doing it. I don't think you can tell me anything about human nature, Susan.

SUSAN. Then what's Primrose? The celestial exception, because you happen to be her mother?

LUCY. Oh, I know, I know! Scratch a mother and find — well, find a mother. I don't know if I'm right or wrong. Honestly, Susan, I don't know if primrose is a mess, or just a nice kid with a hard modern surface.

SUSAN. Either way she'd stand improving.

LUCY. All right, then, try. Try, only don't blame me if she bites you.

[The doorbell sounds off.]

SUSAN. Oh, I hope that isn't a caller! *[Her hands go automatically to her hair.]*

[Lucy rises and moves up to the door.]

LUCY. You've got a one-way mind, Susan. I shouldn't object to a change of subject.

[Exit to hall, returning in a moment with Clarice. Meantime Susan goes to mirror, smoothing her hair.]

CLARICE [chattering nervously]. Yes, I knew Primrose was out. I wanted to see you, Mrs. Aston, if.... [She looks at Susan.]

LUCY. You know my sister? Mrs. Merridew. [She closes the door.]

CLARICE. How do you do? [Her nervousness increases.]

LUCY. Cloak off? it's warm in here.

CLARICE. Thank you.

LUCY. [taking her cloak]. That's a lovely dress. [She hangs cloak over chair up R.]

CLARICE. Yes, it ought to calm me, I know. I mean, thanks awfully for being tactful, Mrs. Aston, but I... I....

LUCY [putting her on settee]. Sit down, Clarice.

CLARICE. Thank you.

[Lucy sits beside her on settee, downstage end.]

SUSAN [still standing]. There's been an accident. Primrose.

CLARICE. Oh, no! At least, no. She isn't lying in broken bits under a car, or anything like that. [To Lucy, with a sort of desperation.] I wish you'd let me speak about my brother.

[Susan tries to interrupt. Lucy waves her to sit. Susan sits protestingly in armchair R.G.]

LUCY. Certainly. If you want to speak about your brother you may speak about your brother. I haven't met him, have I?

CLARICE. No. It's rather a shock to meet John. [Earnestly, as if praising him.] He's ugly. But I mean really, definitely ugly. He's known as the ugliest man in the Rugby football field, and that includes France. I don't know if You've ever seen France play?

LUCY. No.

CLARICE. Nor Scotland? Nor Ireland? Some of the Irishmen aren't pretty.

LUCY [*dryly*]. I imagine International players are chosen for their play.

CLARICE. [*with enthusiasm*]. Oh, of course, on the field John's just a hundred and ninety pound of charging bull. That's where you ought to see him. [*She glances at Susan.*]

Susan. The next time I want to see a man who looks like a hundred and ninety pounds of bull I will.

CLARICE. You'll have a treat.

SUSAN. Plainly.

Lucy. Yes; and in what way is the accident that has happened to Primrose connected with your brother? Did he step on her foot?

CLARICE. Oh, no! As a matter of fact, John's given up trying to dance. That's what I'm pointing out, Mrs. Aston. He has none of the graces. He's absolutely devoid.

LUCY [*sharply*]. That's quite enough about your brother. Come back to Primrose. You've evidently come to tell me something about her, and if it isn't an accident —

Clarice. She's as well as I am.

LUCY. I'm relieved. And now we've got that out of you, and now you've warmed up by chatting about this unnecessary brother of yours, perhaps you'll —

CLARICE. Oh, but he isn't unnecessary!

SUSAN. The girl's a fool about her brother.

CLARICE. No, I'm not. Girls are only fools' about other girl's brothers.

LUCY. Very well, he's a necessary brother. He plays football remarkably, but —

CLARICE. He does other things than that. I don't think life ought to be all sport, and John doesn't either. He's one of the most successful advertising agents in London. And at his age, too!

LUCY! Oh, I've got it! Now I have got it. Clarice, my dear, I don't see touts out of business hours, and as little as possible in them.

CLARICE. Touts? What's a tout?

LUCY. On this occasion she's an enterprising young lady who puts on her best frock and calls on me to try to get her brother the job of advertising my taxi-cabs.

CLARICE. [*hotly, rising*]. If you think I've got a brother who'd ask his sister to do a thing like that —

LUCY. Then you came unasked. All Clarice's own invention.

CLARICE. I did not come unasked.

LUCY. I knew we should get at it. Your brother —

CLARICE. Mrs. Aston, my brother's a sportsman. I didn't come unasked, because Primrose asked me to come.

SUSAN [*rising*]. Oh? Oh!

LUCY. What is it, Susan?

SUSAN. Was there any special reason why Primrose asked you to come here and talk about your ugly brother?

CLARICE. Well, he is ugly, Mrs. Merridew; there's no getting away from it. Not ugly plus charm. Just downright plumb homely ugliness. He's got a face like the full moon with bristles on the top of it. That's his hair, I mean. He's cleanshaven. He is clean, every way, but if you put a smudge on his nose it might improve it, because then it would be visible.

[*It is to be noted that she glances anxiously at the door.*]

LUCY [*dryly*]. Thank you. You have quite established the salient points about your brother.

CLARICE. You do get it, don't you? About as much charm as a hippopotamus. That's John.

LUCY [*grimly*]. We get it. [*She rises and remains standing down L*]. Now, Clarice, why?

CLARICE. Why? Well, that's how God made him. And no beauty parlour could do anything about a case like John's. They really couldn't.

SUSAN [*going to her*]. Oh, I could shake you! When my sister asked 'Why?' she meant —

[*Enter Primrose*]

CLARICE. Thank God! [*She escapes from Susan.*]

PRIMROSE. How far have you got?

CLARICE. [*sinking on the pouf*]. Drowning, my child. Just going down for the third time in ten feet of water.

SUSAN [*icily, sitting erect in armchair R.c.*]. What your friend has been doing, Primrose, is to paint with a wealth of offensive detail the repellent picture of her odious brother. Primrose [*laying a hand on Clarice's shoulder*].

Thank you, my angel. Yes, he's a lout. He's a lamb, but he is a lout.

SUSAN. She said he's a bull.

PRIMROSE [*looking at Lucy*]. I'm going to marry him.

[*There is a slight pause. Susan grips the arms of her chair.*]

LUCY. My dear, that's — [*She stops short.*]

CLARICE. [*rising*]. I'd better drop out now.

PRIMROSE. Thanks, angel. You've done your bit. [*As Clarice goes up.*] Don't go too far away.

[*Clarice nods, gets her cloak and exit.*]

LUCY [*watching her go, then with a half-smile*]. Do I say, 'This is so sudden!'?

PRIMROSE. I don't care, Lucy, Oh, I know what it means to talk about marriage in this house! It's like talking about something decent people don't mention.

SUSAN [*to Lucy*]. I see. You have been bitter about it.

PRIMROSE [*ignoring Susan*]. I've been forced to give a lot of thought lately to the subject of marriage. I don't mind telling you I think marriage is a jolly fine institution.

LUCY. This brother of Clarice's —

PRIMROSE. Of course. I don't mean marriage in general. I mean marriage with John. He makes me feel all funny inside.

SUSAN. What an expression!

PRIMROSE. Love's an expressive thing. He hits me where I matter. That's love.

[*Lucy sits on the settee. For the moment she is content that Susan shall distract Primrose's attention.*]

SUSAN. I can excuse a good deal in a girl who is evidently emotionally disturbed, but —

PRIMROSE. By the way, I'm sorry I was rude to you before I went out. I had to be.

SUSAN. Had to!

PRIMROSE. Well, you're not quite a fool, Aunt.

[*She leans against the upstage arm of the settee.*]

SUSAN [*humorously*]. Dear me!

PRIMROSE. You were watching, and I didn't want to be watched. The cuttlefish, isn't it?

SUSAN. The ... is it? I'm getting confused with so much animal kingdom. Lambs and bulls, and now —

PRIMROSE. The one that squirts out a flood of ink to hide it from attack. Like a smoke-screen. But I did realise I was being a pig.

SUSAN. Now a pig!

PRIMROSE. I was piggish about your headache. I'm sorry, and when I got out I saw we couldn't go on. I saw I absolutely had to have it out with Lucy about John, and so —

[Lucy looks at Susan.

SUSAN. Shall I go?

LUCY. Please, Susan.

[Susan rises, goes to the door, then turns.

SUSAN. Try to be kind to each other.

[Exit Susan. There is a pause. They look at each other. Then tentatively, Primrose hums a few bars of the 'Wedding March'.

LUCY. That's childish, Primrose.

PRIMROSE. Is it? [She looks at gramophone, goes to it and turns it on. It resumes 'The Ride of the Valkyrie.'] Is that stormy enough?

LUCY [rising]. Please! We needn't say this with music.

[Primrose. turns off the gramophone.

[Looking straight out.] Like something leaping on me. Something out of the dark.

PRIMROSE. No, Lucy, no! Things can be sprung on you out of sunshine. Happy things. [She moves towards her, almost wheedling.] Oh, I ... I expect you feel you're awfully young to be a mother-in-law!

LUCY [with a half-smile]. Being tactful, are you?

PRIMROSE. No, you are young. But I did think sending Clarice was a fairly good effort in tact.

LUCY. I understood from Clarice that whatever her brother is, he isn't on the face of him a ladykiller.

PRIMROSE. He jolly well isn't! I've done my best, Lucy.

LUCY. In what way your best?

PRIMROSE. I've not insulted you. If I'd picked a charming man —

LUCY. Has some one told you your father was charming?

PRIMROSE. Some one? Every one but you. All my life.

LUCY. Oh, the busy talkers. The busy, busy talkers! [*She sits on the pouf, facing down stage.*] Well, what they say is true for once.

PRIMROSE. I'm going to lie down and look at the ceiling. [*She lives on the settee.*] Then I shan't be able to look at your face.

[*But the audience will, and Lucy's face, as Primrose proceeds, should be worth watching.*]

I admire my mother more than I admire any woman on earth. My mother was once in love with a man called Charles, and I'm in love myself just now. Speaking as a woman in love, I don't see how my mother could have known Charles for what he was. I don't blame Charles, either.

LUCY [*an involuntary interruption*]. What!

PRIMROSE. [*continuing evenly*]. Charles was born the way he was. Very likely he knew he wasn't marrying man. But he met my brother, and of course he loved her, and of course the only way to get her was to marry her, and so he married her. Later she sent him away, and she had me. She had only me. These last weeks have been a tough time for me, because I fell in love, and I think my mother would prefer me to remain unmarried. My mother worked, and I didn't. I haven't the brains. I think I'm like Aunt Susan in one way. I'm a marrying woman. It's tough to be a marrying woman when you've found the man you want to marry, and when you feel your mother's made an independent

career that's a living protest against the necessity of marriage. But at least there's this. Are all men alike?

LUCY. What? Oh, no! All men are not alike.

PRIMROSE. [*sitting up and putting her feet down on the floor*]. Thanks, Lucy. That's a lot from you. That's an awful lot. I think I know John. I may not know him really, because I'm in love with him. But listen, darling, if I'm making a mistake it's different mistake from the one you made, because John's as different from Charles as two men can be. He doesn't broadcast charm. He's got an ugly mug. [*Tenderly.*] Of course, his smile is like little ripples in summer sunshine, [*fiercely*] and I'm not being sentimental, either.

LUCY [*not appearing to question it*]. No.

PRIMROSE [*rising and strolling over to the table*]. It was an accident that I fell in love with John. I didn't go man-hunting. But I do say, Lucy, if I'd fallen for — well, for a Charles, you'd have had the right to exert your influence — I mean every influence. But John's a happy accident.

LUCY [*nodding casually and rising*]. Pass me a cigarette.

PRIMROSE. Yes.

[*She gets a cigarette from the box on the table and lights it for her. Lucy watches her yearningly, but before the girl turns she has resumed her mask of indifference.*]

Then do help when you're churned up, don't they? I've smoked a lot lately.

LUCY [*lightly*]. I'm not churned up.

PRIMROSE [*indignantly*]. Then you ought to be. You said it was something leaping on you out of the dark, anyhow.

LUCY. That was just a first reaction.

PRIMROSE. Perhaps I've been swelled-headed about what I meant to you.

[*Cigarette in mouth, Lucy lightly kicks the pouf towards the armchair R.c Then she sits in the chair.*]

LUCY [*putting the pouf*]. Come and sit here, Primrose.

[*Primrose sits on the pouf.*]

It's always a losing game to be a mother, You were a baby, and I lost my baby. Then you were a helpless child, and I lost her too, and gained a schoolgirl, half of you as dependent as ever you were, the other half a strange new creature with interests that I couldn't watch and share. Then you grew up, a little woman, frightened at first of womanhood, then used to it and confident about it. I'd lost you very far by then, Primrose, but unlike other lonely mothers with an only child, I had no need to make a tragedy of it. I had my taxi-cabs. I'm not sure, and I wouldn't preach to others the gospel of hard work as the greatest thing in the world, but as you went from me, the taxi-cabs for their own sake, for the sake of the career they represented —

PRIMROSE [*rising, trying nicely to hide her disgust*].

They mean more to you than I do?

LUCY [*blowing out smoke before answering*]. They have their uses.

PRIMROSE. I've been an awful ass. Worrying like that. Nearly going barmy because I thought you'd — Oh, doesn't matter! [*Slight pause.*] John's here, Lucy. He's in the dining room and I expect the poor lamb's sweating himself into a decline because we both thought —

LUCY. I shall be very glad to see your future husband, Primrose.

PRIMROSE. Thanks. I'll bring him.

[*Exit. Lucy is still sitting. She has a halfsmothered impulse to recall Primrose after watching her go, and as the door closes she just lets out:*]

LUCY. Prim ... [*She shakes her head.*] Taxi-cabs! Taxi-cabs, and she believed me! [*Rising.*] She believed me. [*She draws smoke fiercely and exhales.*] The smoke-screen! [*Watching the door.*] But I'm behind the screen, You John. It's very simple, John. If you're not kind to Primrose I shall shoot you.

CURTAIN

A REVIEW

It is the pleasure of professors and critics to make close comparisons of one author with another; to which young students of originality may object that no author ever conceived his work for this purpose or process, leaving Dogberry after all in the right as to the value of comparisons. The answer to the objection is that the student obtains his mental stocktaking from such process: he can gain good bearings, if he is wise, without loss of appreciation of the authors compared.

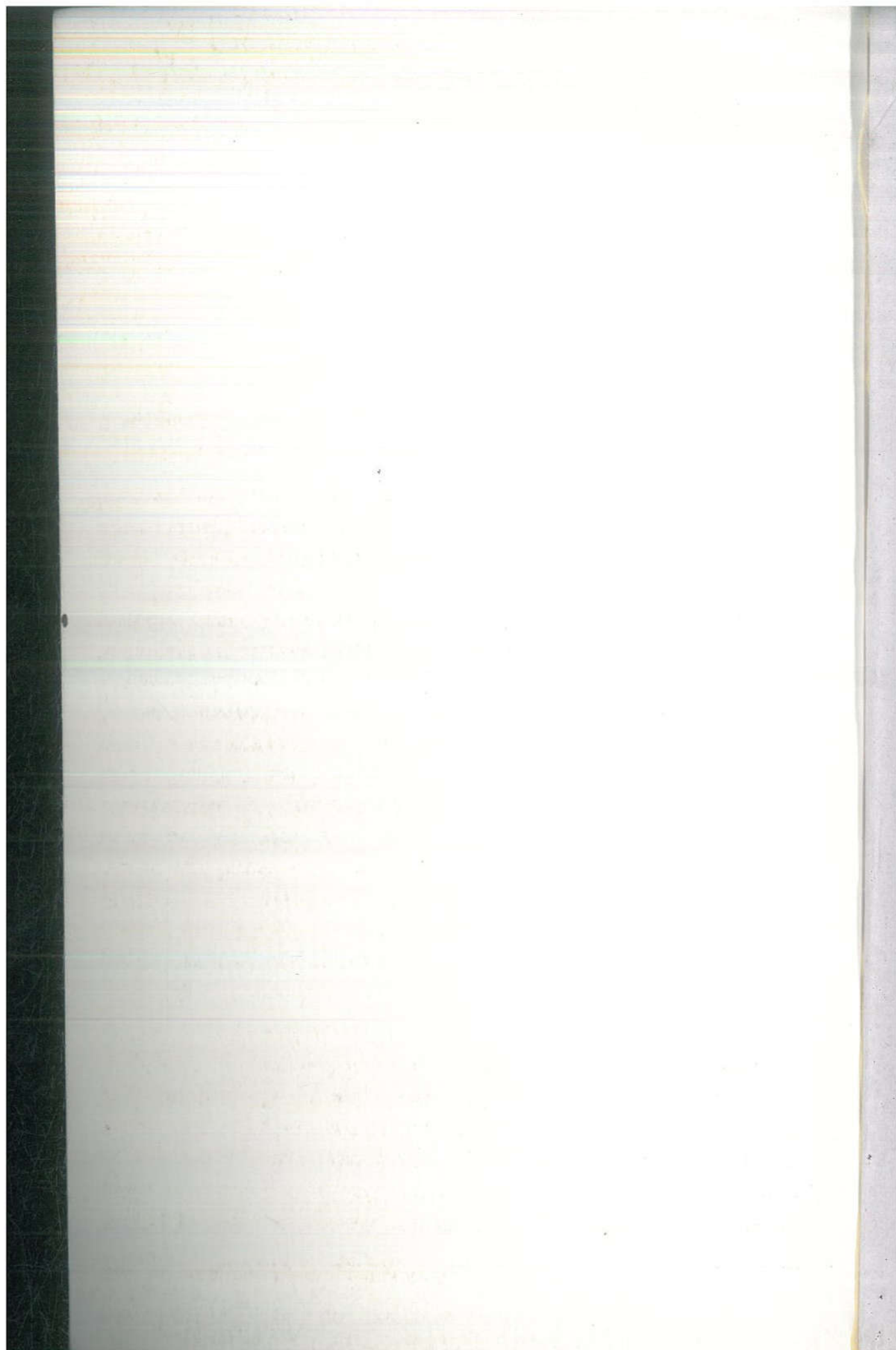
Mr. Brighouse approaches the theatre at an angle quite different from that of Mr. Bottomley. He has written many one-act plays, the known of which are probably *Lonesome Like* and *The Price of Coal*, both of 1911, both dealing with humble characters of his native Lancashire, in the manner shared by his fellow-dramatist and sometime collaborator, Stanley Houghton. His most successful full-length play is *Hobson's Choice*, a comedy in similar milieu. Even as Synge looked for dramatic significance in his peasants, Houghton and Mr. Brighouse seek to embody in faithfully-drawn local types their sense of the drama of life. Miss Horniman's Manchester Repertory and later the Liverpool Playhouse welcomed enthusiastically this new realism. We must remember, however, in comparing Synge, that the Irishman deprecated, q.v.a., the realism of 'joyless, palid words,' and, compared with his rich medium, the honest Lancashire speech was drab. In fact the Repertory Theatre was in danger, at the hands of copyists, from stunning success in the achievement of squalid circumstance. Even to-day the earnest theatre, challenging the sybarites of the West End, is in danger of this altogether secondary object. Looking back on its pre-war kitchens and public-houses, one realises one's debt to dramatists with Mr. Brighouse's sense of the theatre, his ability to hold the human theme triumphantly above the preoccupation of realistic milieu.

In *Smoke-Screens*, Mr. Brighouse has certainly discarded the kitchen and, with admirable flexibility of sympathy, he gives a smart London 'Interior', the flat of a self-made woman, in all its purely post-war inferences. The modes, manners and speech are

bright, and to some people, harsh. But the refined ones among us must not allow the hard exterior of Mr. Brighouse's modern young woman to distract our appreciation of the insight with which he handles the human theme. Clarice has a slice of excellent juvenile comedy. Nobody should be allowed to be over-emphatic or shrill: the author has provided simple tension beneath sophisticated brightness.

Mr. Bottomley concentrates on what parting means, particularly to the mother. Mr. Brighouse has exactly the same theme in conclusion, with a method entirely different. Mr. Bottomley is gentle, poetic and general: Mr. Brighouse is purposely harsh and prosaic, and he particularises his theme both in manners and in motivation, for his 'parting' is conditioned by a postwar divorce and circumstances peculiar to these decades. Mr. Bottomley would dispense with setting that divides performer and hearer, so that his delicate poetry may become homely and intimate among us. Mr. Brighouse has more sense of 'theatre' as commonly understood: he would strike us with exit and endurance, with situation, the sense of which he inherits from the Edwardian theatre. I am sure he would not, like Mr. Bottomley, wish the framesetting of the roscenium away. Yet their theme of mother and daughter is as old as the hills: that each author gives a purely modern version, startlingly different to mode, makes the contrast very interesting.

[The note on the author and play is acknowledged with thanks to J.W. Marriot, the editor of *One-Act Plays of Today*.]



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